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FEATURE

MACS POWER

There's more to the Mac than meets the i

PREVIEW

GTA: SAN ANDREAS

Three cities. One great game. No mistakes.

PREVIEWED

KINGDOM UNDER FIRE [XB]

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SECOND SIGHT [PS2/XB/GC]

DEVIL MAY CRY 3 [PS2]

OUTRUN 2 [XB]

MYST IV [PC]

180 PAGES OF RAZOR-SHARP GAMING

PREVIEWED

SPLINTER CELL 3 CHAOS THEORY

You didn't think he'd stay in the dark for long, did you?

RETRO

SUPER METROID

Samus's greatest ever 2D adventure?


eMag

Morbid as it may sound, we all know fate will conspire in some way to call time on our existence. There's no getting around that fact, and with that in mind, we decided to compile a list of things that, as gamers, you really should do before you shuffle off this mortal coil.

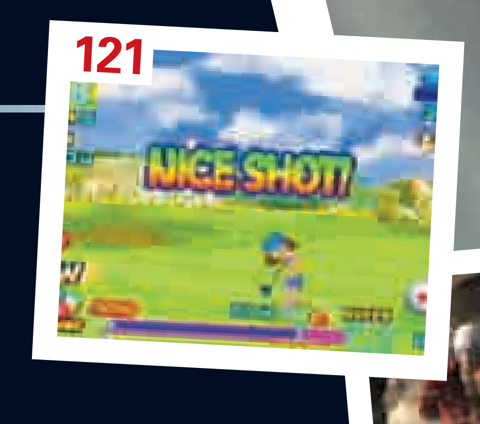
Of course, there were many things that didn't quite make our top 50. Learning to play the banjo Miyamoto-style, for instance, was shunned in favour of the simpler but equally game-related ocarina. However, once the team had cogitated, ruminated and generally mulled over the multitude of possibilities, we eventually hit upon 50 things that, to be considered a proper gamer, you simply have to do. Some you will have already achieved, others will take a little bit of work, all must be done. Come on, you know you owe it to yourself.

Simon Phillips,
Group Editor

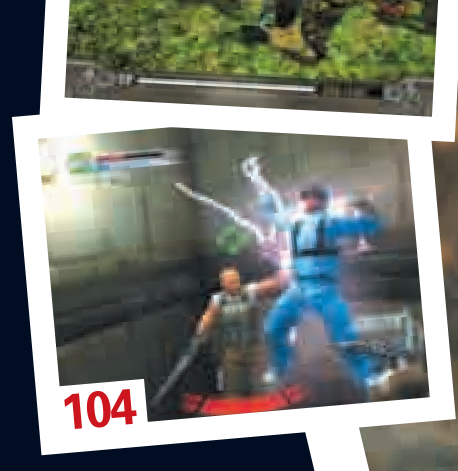












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GOOD THINGS COME TO THOSE WHO WAIT

SONY'S NEXT-GEN HARDWARE TO BE UNVEILED BEFORE YEAR'S END

The next-gen race is now fully underway, with the date of the PlayStation3's intended world premiere being revealed at Sony's PlayStation Meeting 2004 in Tokyo. A schedule showing timelines depicting upcoming events for the PSone, PlayStation2, PSP and what was tentatively labelled 'Next System' has put the debut of Sony's new hardware at the end of 2004 – somewhere around the fifth anniversary of the launch of the PlayStation2.

The first version of the new TOOL development kit will be ready and shipped to developers at the beginning of 2005, allowing work to be started on games before Sony presents the new hardware at next May's E3. Playable games, however, aren't expected until the Tokyo Games Show in September 2005, the same time that Sony plans to send version two of the TOOL development hardware to studios.

Despite there being no PS3 (or should we say Next System?) launch date available, some sources have pointed out similarities between the PS3 and PSP schedules, suggesting that if the PS3's timeline continues to match the PSP's we could see a Japanese release by Christmas 2005 – around the same time that Microsoft has said it plans to release its next

hardware. However, because of the difficulty involved in producing software for the PS3 (which is new hardware) compared to the PSP (a modification of existing hardware), we'd say a 2006 release is more likely.

This puts more pressure on Microsoft, which is expected to announce its new hardware (dubbed Xbox 2) some time this autumn. Having already shipped development kits, Microsoft is planning to launch the Xbox's successor in late 2005, giving the Xbox 2 pole position in the next-gen race and a Christmas all to itself. However, given the Xbox's current standing in Japan, it'll take more than the festive spirit to convince gamers to buy Xbox 2 instead of waiting to see what PS3 delivers.

That leaves Nintendo, which, in typical Nintendo fashion, is being hush-hush about its next-gen hardware (codenamed 'Revolution'), preferring to push its upcoming DS handheld instead of getting into a war of words and technical specs with rival companies. However, comments from Nintendo president Satoru Iwata regarding the Revolution suggest the company is choosing to innovate and spend time creating something unique, rather than rushing the hardware onto the shelves.

> "IF THE **PS3'S TIMELINE** STAYS THE SAME AS THE PSP'S, WE COULD POSSIBLY SEE A **JAPANESE RELEASE** FOR THE HOME CONSOLE BY **CHRISTMAS 2005**"

All this talk of new hardware has already set tongues wagging in the retail sector. Industry magazine *MCV* has reported that sectors of the UK market are looking to Sony to lower the price of the PS2 before Christmas to ensure all the talk of the PS3 doesn't affect current sales – which can only be a good move. The PSone continued to sell well long after the PS2's release by being lower in price and appealing to a different audience with its dancing games. Considering the versatility the PS2 is already showing with its EyeToy and games like *SingStar*, as long as the price drops, it should be retail's golden child for a long while yet.

INDUSTRY CHEST BEATING

AS IS ALWAYS THE CASE, THE CLOSER NEW HARDWARE COMES, THE MORE SHOUTING THE COMPETITION DOES



Ballmer: "We can take Sony next generation."

THE GREEN CORNER: STEVE BALLMER, MICROSOFT

"I bet we can take Sony next generation" claims the ever-evangelical Microsoft CEO, Steve Ballmer. Ballmer, who has become an internet comedy legend thanks to a video of one of his energetic presentations, is confident Microsoft can win the next-generation battle despite the fact that the current Xbox hardware continues to lose money. In an interview at Microsoft's Worldwide Partner Conference, Ballmer explained: "Look what we've done with Xbox… We may still be losing money, but we have gone from nowhere to a significant player with a whole different approach. We've generated something brand new." While Microsoft has indeed made good progress, and while Xbox 2 will claim a marginal advantage by being released first and in time for the festive period, it's worth considering the Xbox's current problems in Japan. These issues will have a substantial effect on how much impact Microsoft's new hardware will have in the East, and no amount of pant-wetting exclamations from Ballmer will change this.



Iwata: "Customers do not want online games."

THE PURPLE CORNER: SATORU IWATA, NINTENDO

"Customers do not want online games" says Nintendo president Satoru Iwata. Citing sales of the online PS2 golf title in the *Minna no Golf* series against its better-selling predecessor, Iwata claimed this is proof that gamers don't want to go online. In a presentation for the Japan Economic Foundation he explained that "most customers do not wish to pay the extra money for connection to the internet, and for some customers, connection procedures to the internet are still not easy." This view of online gaming doesn't bode well for built-in connectivity on Nintendo's Revolution hardware. But considering the community built up around the unofficial Warp Pipe software that enables gamers to use their Cubes online via LAN adaptors and the obvious desire to play titles such as *Mario Kart* online, these are worrying words for many Nintendo fans.

OUR TWO CENTS

It's no surprise Nintendo is keeping fairly quiet about the Revolution, preferring to concentrate on making the hardware unique. We remember waiting for the N64 to arrive while the Saturn and PSone battled it out in the shops, and in our opinion the wait was worth it. We just hope this delay doesn't end up hurting the company in the long run. On the other hand, Iwata's comments dismissing the importance of online games are short-sighted and, put simply, wrong. As for Ballmer, we've learned to take his rants with a pinch of salt. He may have a point about how far the Xbox has come, but underestimating the power of the PlayStation brand when your console is failing so terribly in Japan – a region many regard as the most important of the gaming territories – is a mistake.



Data stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING

DOUBLE THE FUN

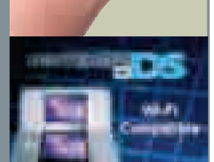
If you fancy going along to this year's Game Stars Live event but are too stingy, broke or lazy to order tickets, we could have the perfect solution. games™ has teamed up with the event organisers to offer our readers a 'two for the price of one' deal for show tickets, making it even easier to be among the first to see *Pro Evo 4* or try your hand at becoming the nation's best gamer. If this sounds like your idea of a good time, call the ticket hotline now on 08702 720012 and quote 'HIGH' to get a second person in with you absolutely free. Bargain.



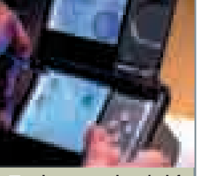


APOCALYPSE SOON

Struggling Interplay is to enter the notoriously tough MMORPG market with a title based on the *Fallout* IP. While this is great news for anyone who thought *Brotherhood Of Steel* was too much of a diversion from the classic formula, the scrapping of *Warhammer Online* by the financially sound Climax must be fair warning that this is not a venture Interplay can afford to take lightly – especially when it has debts of almost $1.5 million…



Japanese and US gamers know when the DS is due…



…but once again we're left waiting for a release date.



SONY AND NINTENDO REVEAL MORE PSP AND DS DETAILS

HANDHELD FACE OFF

With all the excitement surrounding the next wave of home consoles, you'd be forgiven for forgetting about the approaching handheld war between Nintendo's DS and Sony's PSP. However, just as with the big boys, details on these little wonders keep flowing.

New information regarding Sony's PSP surfaced at the company's PlayStation Meeting 2004 conference last month. It's been confirmed the PSP will support up to 16 players in its multiplayer games via a wireless LAN link, which will come built into the console as standard. There were also mutterings regarding the possibility of being able to play online multiplayer games using a home wireless LAN system or one of the few public wireless LAN hot spots, but they weren't discussed in full.

Also in the world of PSP was the demonstration of an interesting piece of software cleverly named Talkman (you know, like Walkman, but different). Using the built-in microphone port on the PSP, the Talkman software allows the user to speak into their machine in one language and have it translated. This could be an invaluable aid for lazy tourists, as all they'd have to do when looking for the post office is speak into the PSP, have their words translated and then play back the translated version to whichever poor local they've accosted.

The demonstration showed this working between Japanese and English, and nine languages will be supported in the final version. But while foreign negotiation is all well and good, we're more interested in real-time multilingual fight-talk between PSP users. Toshiba recently revealed its mobile phones would have real-time translated conversations as a future feature, so surely the PSP could take advantage of such technology?

New Nintendo DS details are also starting to emerge. Unconfirmed reports



"THE PSP WAS CRITICISED BY NINTENDO BECAUSE TOO MUCH EMPHASIS HAS BEEN PLACED ON ITS MUSIC AND MOVIE FUNCTIONS RATHER THAN ITS ABILITY AS A GAMES MACHINE"



"USING THE PSP'S BUILT-IN MICROPHONE, THE TALKMAN SOFTWARE ENABLES YOU TO SAY A PHRASE IN ONE LANGUAGE AND HAVE IT TRANSLATED AND SPOKEN ALOUD BY THE MACHINE. IDEAL FOR LAZY TOURISTS"

from Japanese retailers are suggesting Nintendo intends to release the DS on 4 November at a price of ¥19,000 (£95), with a US launch date pencilled in for 11 November with a provisional price of $179.95. Five or six software titles are expected to launch with the console, with the total expected to reach 11 by the end of the year.

No UK release date or price has been suggested, but we should expect to see the DS in early 2005 rather than before Christmas and be prepared to pay something in the region of £180 – history has shown that cross-Atlantic pricing normally translates numerically rather than by value of currency. Still, the DS looks to be much cheaper than the PSP, which is currently expected to cost upwards of ¥30,000 (£150).

The PSP was recently criticised by a Nintendo spokesperson because too much emphasis has been placed on its music and movie functions rather than its ability as a games machine. While this kind of inter-company sniping is expected, the comments do raise some genuine concerns regarding the PSP. Its high price is a result of all its media convergence, and it looks like the batteries will suffer too.

Internet news sites are rife with rumours about the PSP's battery life (with figures ranging from two and a half hours to a less practical 20 minutes), and while we tend to take internet rumours with a pinch of salt, Sony's silence on this matter is worrying. Talk of an extra battery pack existing in the machine's initial peripheral line-up strongly hints at a battery life that's perhaps more Game Gear than Game Boy…



Sony seems keen to market the PSP as a mini media centre rather than a gaming platform.

ON THE OUTSIDE

While arguments about whether the PSP or DS will prove to be superior are already ringing across internet forums, other forces are already at work to usurp both machines before they arrive. Tiger Telematics' Gizmondo (yes, that's its real name) is due to hit the shelves towards the middle of October and has already raised a few eyebrows, simply by positioning itself as a multifunctional unit. The handheld not only runs games made specifically for the machine, but also plays movies (which can be downloaded via the Gizmondo's USB port) and music, as well as having GPS functions and the ability to let users send text messages via the built-in pay-as-you-go sim card. However, what we reckon could give the Gizmondo the edge is the fact it runs from basic SD memory cards and uses a Windows-based operating system not unlike many Palm PCs. Just as the GP32 opened the door for bedroom coders to create their own games, so we suspect the Gizmondo may end up doing the same. Although at £220, it may cost more than many people are prepared to pay.



Tiger Telematics' Gizmondo boasts a range of useful functions.



NOT ANOTHER…

PSX STORY

WE'RE FORCED TO PLAY THE WAITING GAME

It's bad news for those who were looking forward to getting their mitts on Sony's PSX before Christmas. Plans to release the combined hard-disc video recorder, DVD burner and PlayStation2 before the end of the year have been put on hold and Sony has now said that a launch in North America and Europe will not happen until 2005.

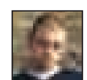
Despite having a good start in Japan, where it was released last Christmas, the machine has already run into trouble and sales figures have fallen short of the expectations brought on by the encouraging launch. This has largely been attributed to Sony's decision to drop certain features from the hardware in order to get it out in time for Christmas.

It's not clear whether the delay in the US and Europe is the result of Sony learning from its mistake in Japan and deciding to take its time to make sure things are done right, or whether it's down to other considerations. Sony's UK PR manager has commented that the delay is "due to the inclusion of specific features to suit the European market," but it's not been said what these features could be. Guess we'll have to wait until next year to see for ourselves.



Data stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



GARD TO WALK THE PLANK?

After releasing just one game in its seven-year life, *Galleon* developer Confounding Factor may close its doors after the imminent US release of the game. Atlus will be handling the North American launch of the seafaring adventure – which has nothing to do with pirates, apparently – but sources close to the company have alleged that Toby Gard's studio will close after its debut title. It's thought that poor sales of *Galleon* are mostly to blame, although the prospect of potentially having to wait another seven years for a sequel is hardly encouraging.





GOTTA MILK 'EM ALL

New info out of Japan finally confirms that *Pokémon Emerald* will hit stores in the East in September. Early details suggest that it will be a more comprehensive companion to *Ruby* and *Sapphire* than *Yellow* was to *Red* and *Blue*, with enhancements on the two-on-two battle system as well as actions that can be used before starting a scrap. In typical Nintendo fashion, there'll be a limited edition GBA SP to reinforce the launch, this time a saucy green number featuring legendary monster Rayquaza.



■ *Alias* – great licence, shame about the game.

■ *Juiced* could help revive Acclaim's fortunes.

■ *Turok: Evolution* – yeah, well, least said the better…

GAME OVER FOR ACCLAIM?

THREATS OF COURT CASES AND POSSIBLE BANKRUPTCY HOUND TUROK PUBLISHER

Things aren't looking particularly rosy for Acclaim after it revealed huge losses in the last financial year, as well as a substantial decline in revenue. Figures have shown that in the 12 months ending 31 March 2004, the publisher suffered a net loss of $56.4 million, with revenue down $67.4 million from the 2002-03 financial year. This poor performance, combined with $84.8 million losses from the previous financial year, means Acclaim could be facing bankruptcy.

Unless a deal with a new credit facility can be found to replace its existing arrangement with GMAC Commercial Finance, with whom it has taken out several loans, the once glorious publisher that bought us the likes of the *Turok* games and the hugely successful *Burnout* series could well go to the wall.

Obviously, this is bad news for Acclaim, but it gets worse. The company has recently admitted that it's lost the rights to the *Turok* franchise as well as the licensing rights for the Major League Baseball Players' Association. Both of these losses follow Acclaim's alleged non-payment of royalties, and won't make life any easier for the struggling publisher. Admittedly, after the appalling *Turok: Evolution* it probably won't be weeping too hard about that loss, but without the baseball licence Acclaim will lose the right to use player names and likenesses in its games. This will have a devastating effect on the *All-Star Baseball* series – a huge blow as this has been one of Acclaim's few success stories over the last couple of years, particularly in America. All this has come just months after another of the firm's cash cows, the *Burnout* series, was handed to EA by developer Criterion.

The news that forthcoming title *Combat Elite: WWII Paratroopers* has been delayed indefinitely could be the last straw for Acclaim. *Combat Elite* developer BattleBorne is alleging that the publisher has violated its contract with the studio, and a court has ruled that the game cannot be released until the case is resolved.

With the future looking so bleak, Acclaim's stock has been hit hard, with prices falling 22 per cent. With no new credit deal finalised, the loss of vital licences, and court cases starting to roll in, the threat of bankruptcy for Acclaim is looking very real indeed.

An Acclaim spokesman was asked about the publisher's current difficulties but was unable to comment.

NCSOFT TO OPEN NEW OFFICES IN LONDON

EUROPE OR BUST



Acclaimed Korean publisher NCSoft has announced plans to expand its operations by opening a European division. The company intends to invest around €4.8 million in the establishment of NCSoft Europe, which will be based in London and will focus on the release of NCSoft's titles in this territory.

NCSoft has been responsible for some of the world's greatest online multiplayer experiences to date, including the *Lineage* series and the more recent *City Of Heroes*. Up until now, these titles have only been available to European gamers through import, but NCSoft Europe plans to release both *Lineage II* and *City Of Heroes* here by the end of the year.

The new NCSoft Europe division is to be headed by Climax Group chairman Geoffrey Heath, who also worked with Activision during the Atari 2600 era. "NCSoft is a business that has captured the imagination of gamers across Asian and US markets," said Heath. "Europe is the next step for the company as it grows a global online games network."

The company hopes to become a leading provider of online multiplayer titles in Europe, and this can only mean good things for PAL gamers.



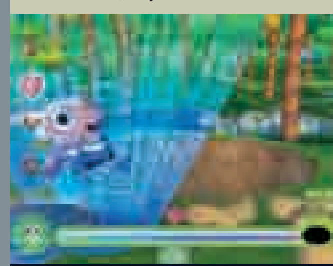
Super-powered crime fighting is on its way.



'CRAZY, BUT IT WORKS' GAMES

No.5 SWITCH

Pick a button, any button



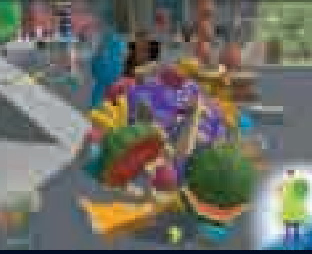
No.4 RIBBIT KING

Golf, but with frogs and no rules



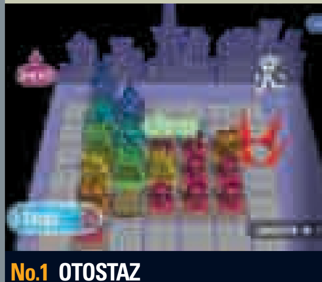
No.3 VIB RIPPLE

Trampolining at its very best



No.2 KATAMARI DAMASHII

Roll, roll, roll the ball…



No.1 OTOSTAZ

Paper-house building a-go-go



IGNITION TO BRING CLASSIC SNK GAMES TO EUROPE

PAL FOR SNK

Ignition Entertainment has revealed that it plans to bring a range of titles from the SNK Neo Geo to Europe. The games that look to be included are *SNK vs. Capcom*, *Samurai Shodown*, the *King Of Fighters* games and the *Metal Slug* series. The titles that we can expect to see first will be *Metal Slug Advance* and *Metal Slug 3*, which will appear on PlayStation2 and Xbox in October, while the other games are expected to be released sometime between autumn 2004 and spring 2005.

"SNK games have always proved very popular with gamers," said Ignition's managing director, Vijay Chadha. "We're committed to working with SNK to officially bring their titles to all PAL territories. We're all massive fans of SNK titles here at Ignition, and are very much looking forward to bringing the SNK brand back to Europe."

All SNK's titles have been published in America by SNK Neo Geo USA, and in order to comply with submission rules for 2D titles over there they were usually sold in bundle packs, with *King Of Fighters 2002* and *2003* being sold together, as were *Metal Slug 4* and *5*. It's not yet been confirmed whether this policy will be continued with the European releases.



Data stream

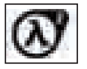
BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



GET YOUR KIT ON

Konami's latest update in its massively popular *Pro Evolution Soccer* series (*Winning Eleven* in Japan) will see many clubs from key European leagues – namely Dutch, Spanish and Italian ones – being officially licensed for inclusion. This means that as well as correct player names, the likenesses, flags and kits will all be true to life for the likes of Ajax, Real Madrid and Parma. This will take the game's club-team total to 136 – a high for the series and a great complement to the 50-plus national sides with which to do sporting battle.





THE VALVE TIGHTENS

The *Half-Life 2* source-code theft now seems to be more or less sewn up. New information suggests that the primary hacker was a German who, despite having nothing to do with the later theft or distribution, was good enough to confess his deeds to Valve and give the names of those involved. There was even talk of the hacker being offered a job within the company but instead he'll now find himself facing criminal charges brought by German authorities as well as civil lawsuits from Valve.



IT'S TIME TO START PLAYING

GAME STARS LIVE BRINGS OUT THE BIG GUNS (WELL, BIG GAMES)

Visitors to Game Stars Live can get their hands on the Prince.

In order to ensure that this year's debut Game Stars Live event is a hit with the gaming public, organiser ELSPA has secured playable code for some of the year's most anticipated titles. It has already been confirmed that visitors will be able to go hands-on with *Halo 2*, as well as the likes of *Prince Of Persia 2*, *Splinter Cell 3: Chaos Theory*, *Pro Evolution Soccer 4*, *Sid Meier's Pirates!* and *Ghost Recon 2*. It's expected that more titles will be added to the list before the five-day event begins on 1 September.

"We're extremely pleased with the number of major titles playable to the UK public for the very first time," explained Leo Tan, Game Stars Live's PR manager. *Halo 2* and *Pro Evolution Soccer 4* are bound to be obvious favourites (we still remember the packed *Pro Evo 3* stand at last year's ECTS) and while there are perhaps too many sequels for our liking, the chance to see *Sid Meier's Pirates!* makes a trip to the show sound more than worthwhile.

Despite his overall enthusiasm for the show, one aspect of the event that Tan was more reluctant to talk about was whether any of the games would become part of the show's televised challenges, thereby giving those who can't make it to the event a preview of the upcoming titles. "Although there will be many exciting opportunities to play games against seasoned pros for prizes, what those games will actually consist of is being kept a closely guarded secret," he said.

Nevertheless, we're fairly certain that Konami, Ubisoft, Microsoft and many others will be more than happy with any extra exposure their games would receive from a live airing, so it may be worth setting the video after all.

Other highlights of Game Stars Live, which will run alongside the European Games Network trade show, include the European Online Gaming Championships and the Get Into Gaming area which will be offering careers and education advice for anyone wanting to enter the games industry.

> "WE'RE EXTREMELY PLEASED WITH THE NUMBER OF MAJOR TITLES PLAYABLE TO THE UK PUBLIC FOR THE VERY FIRST TIME"
>
> LEO TAN, PR MANAGER, GAME STARS LIVE

MICROSOFT AIMS TO SECURE BETTER SUPPORT FOR XBOX 2 IN THE JAPANESE MARKET

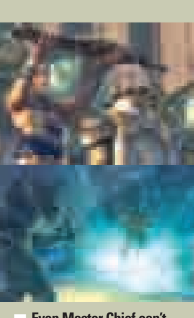
SECOND TIME LUCKY?

It's well known that Microsoft's Xbox has continually failed to make any impact in Japan, so we're hardly surprised to learn that the American giant plans to rectify this for Xbox 2.

Microsoft's Tokyo game development division boss Norman Cheuk is fully aware of the current machine's failings and is planning to change this by the time Xbox 2 hits the shelves. "It's too late to be number one on this version of the console," Cheuk told Bloomberg Japan. "A lot of what we're doing today is to position ourselves. We're looking at the future generations where we'd like to be successful."

Despite numerous attempts to break into the Japanese market, the Xbox has not managed to make an impact, with few, if any, of its titles ever making the Japanese top ten. Many feel that one of the reasons why the Xbox is unsuccessful in Japan is because of its lack of eastern titles, most notably the massively popular RPGs like *Final Fantasy* and *Dragon's Quest*. The cancellation of upcoming MMORPG *True Fantasy Live Online* must have been a blow, as it would have huge appeal for the Japanese market.

However, recent interviews with Square Enix suggest that Japanese developers are warming to the machine (albeit very slowly). We're sure that it's only a matter of time before Microsoft manages to secure the sort of exclusive title that Japanese gamers will be desperate to play.





Even Master Chief can't help the Xbox in Japan.



ELSPA REVEALS SHOWMEN

EGN CONFERENCE TO BE HEADLINED BY INDUSTRY STALWARTS

With the European Games Network (EGN) trade show only a few weeks away, the keynote speakers for the conference have been announced by the show's organisers, the Entertainment and Leisure Software Publishers' Association (ELSPA). Doug Lowenstein, president of US trade group the Entertainment Software Association (ESA) will open the three-day conference on 1 September with a speech that is expected to discuss what to look forward to in the next decade of gaming. EA's European publishing boss Gerhard Florin will appear the following day, though the subject of his speech has not been announced.

"EGN is for people in the business of games," said ELSPA's business development director, Tamsin Aspinall. "Individuals like Gerhard Florin and Doug Lowenstein demonstrate the level of influence the conference programme will bring to delegates. It is a reflection of the positive reaction of the industry worldwide to EGN and provides a solid platform on which to build a high-quality and, more importantly, a highly relevant conference programme."

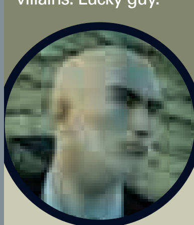
The EGN conference will run alongside the EGN trade show at London's ExCel exhibition centre. Support for the show continues to grow, with over 300 companies now pledging their support. Acclaim, Atari, EA, Codemasters, Square Enix and Capcom are just a few of the publishers who are expected to attend.



SEPARATED AT BIRTH

games™ tracks down those videogame lookalikes

No wonder Duncan Goodhew hasn't been out winning Olympic medals recently – he's too busy travelling the world, popping caps in the asses of villains. Lucky guy.



GAMES ROOM 101

THE NEGATIVE SIDE OF VIDEOGAMING

NO. 22: LIVING IN A BOX

The complaint that western gamers always get the thin end of the wedge when it comes to seeing their games in attractive packaging is certainly not a new one. However, the release of Nintendo's NES Classics on the GBA has reminded us exactly how far behind Japan we are when it comes to how our game packaging looks… if only because it seems like a wasted opportunity on Nintendo's part.

Taking the concept of collectable to the extreme, the Japanese boxes are really lovely – virtually perfect miniature re-creations of the original NES packaging, housed in transparent boxes that any respectable gamer would happily have on their shelf (possibly even buying the whole set). By contrast, the UK packaging is bland beyond reason, sitting in bog-standard GBA boxes with a lacklustre design that fails to inspire in any way. Considering the twentieth anniversary of the NES is such a big thing, you'd have thought Nintendo might have given gamers a reason to spend £15 on a game that you can pick up on eBay for less than a fiver.

If it had made the effort with the packaging, we might have been tempted to buy the lot… even though we've got the originals. What a waste.



The Japanese versions of Nintendo's retro remakes are very collectable and look absolutely divine.



Over here, the results are very different. Talk about throwing away a massive opportunity…

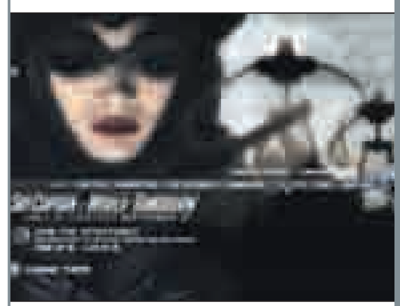
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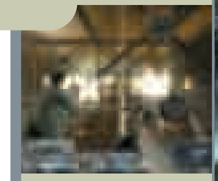
BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



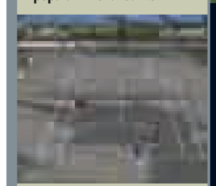
DOES EXACTLY WHAT IT SAYS IN THE GAME

What better way to advertise your forthcoming movie than to unleash a free videogame upon the world? Accompanying *Sky Captain And The World Of Tomorrow* – the retro-futuristic film that's been filmed entirely against computer-generated backgrounds – the fully fledged free PC download available from the movie's official website marks a noticeable shift from the two-second Java thrills to which surfers have become accustomed. It may not be much, but with score challenges to win premiere tickets, uptake will probably be higher than with many similar free downloads. This could be the beginning of a neat form of advertising.

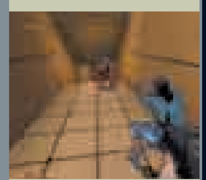




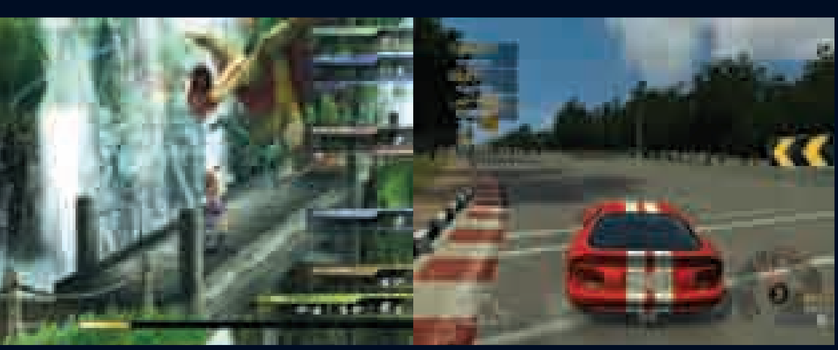
Rainbow Six 3 remains a popular Live favourite.



Online serve-and-volley manoeuvres in *Top Spin*.



XIII – not a huge seller but enlivened by Live play.



MICROSOFT'S FIRST MILLION

XBOX LIVE SUBSCRIBERS REACH SEVEN FIGURES

Microsoft revealed last month that its Xbox Live service has now passed the one million subscribers mark, which can only be good news as it looks to consolidate its market position before the next-generation consoles are released.

Since its launch in November 2002, Xbox Live has been adopted in 24 countries, with members clocking up an average of 265,549 hours' play each day. Furthermore, 220 million online sessions have now been logged and the total amount of hours spent by gamers on the online services is a mind-boggling 160 million. "Consumers are clearly choosing Xbox Live online videogames as the new digital entertainment nirvana," said Robbie Bach, senior vice president and chief Xbox officer at Microsoft. "Our community has reached a million members in record time, and we've got hot new games and expanded features that will continue to feed our customers' almost insatiable appetite for online games."

'Insatiable' is about right, as gamers still can't seem to get enough of the likes of *Rainbow Six 3* and *Project Gotham 2*, especially as the latter has now received some excellent downloadable content. We spend way too much time already playing *Gotham* and *Rainbow Six*, and incoming hits like *Halo 2* and *Burnout 3* are bound to take up even more of our spare time.



THE SQUARE DANCE

SQUARE ENIX REORGANISES ITS EUROPEAN DIVISION

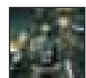
In a bid to show a stronger focus in Europe, Square Enix has announced that several changes are to take place at its European offices. Square Enix Europe Ltd will now be known simply as Square Enix Ltd, but, most importantly, John Yamamoto (former Atlus US CEO and president) will take over as CEO and president for the renamed European branch.

"Strong marketing, sales, distribution and community management will help us penetrate the ever-growing and complex European market," Yamamoto-san said. "As a publisher, the role of Square Enix will prove to be essential within our worldwide strategy."

Let's just hope this means that Square Enix will be paying more attention to future titles, because recent PAL conversions – the awfully bordered *Final Fantasy X* and *Kingdom Hearts*, to name but two – left a lot to be desired.

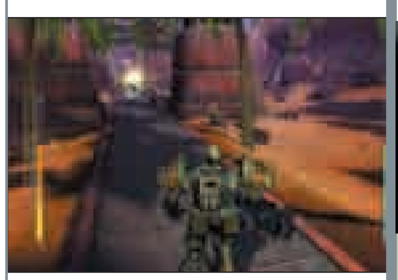
Data Stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



WELCOME TO THE THIRD WAVE

New developer Third Wave Games is already well into production on a new mech title, *War World*, but you won't be able to buy it in the shops – the game is a download-only affair. The freshly established firm has been set up by three industry veterans, including Morten Broderson and Johnni Christensen, who both held important positions at Rare before branching out with this new company. *War World* – a third-person online mech shoot-'em-up with a heavy emphasis on customisation – will be available later in the year for under $20, and you can't say fairer than that.



SOMETHING FOR NOTHING

An enticing Xbox Live recruitment incentive is just coming to an end in the US. The scheme that sees those who recommend friends for the online service getting a free game – *Top Spin, RalliSport 2* or *Links 2004* – is not currently scheduled to cross the Atlantic although Microsoft has made it clear that it is always looking for new ways in which to increase Live subscriptions. As such, we look forward to reporting on similar freebies being announced in the coming months. Fingers crossed…

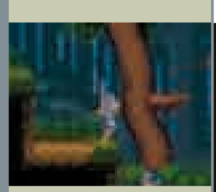


Mobile game of the month

RUBIK'S CUBE

Of all the things you'd think would be most enjoyable on your mobile phone, we'd guess that solving a Rubik's Cube wouldn't rank particularly highly. Thanks to 02's efforts, though, you'd be wrong. For some strange reason, the hypnotic compulsion to match up those coloured tiles is more addictive than we care to mention. Don't let the simple graphical style fool you – there's as much challenge here as you'd get from a regular puzzle, but without the temptation to cheat by peeling the stickers off.





Square Enix's deal with Vodafone is good news…



…though it's Nokia who could do with the help.

SQUARE ENIX EXTENDS ITS MOBILE GAMING STRATEGY

ALL SQUARE WITH VODAFONE

Having enjoyed great success with its mobile games in Japan, it should come as no surprise that Square Enix has decided to branch out and bring its range of quality titles for phones to Europe.

Working closely with Vodafone and its Live! service, Square Enix will offer gamers a number of downloadable titles in the coming months, with more planned for the future if the first releases are a hit.

Initially, three titles will be available through the Vodafone Live! community – *Aleste* (a vertically scrolling shoot-'em-up that originated on the Mega Drive), *Actraiser* (the genre-defining side-scrolling slash-'em-up from the SNES) and a special mobile version of Square Enix's recent PS2 release, *Drakengard*. All three games will become available throughout Europe during August.

"Our relationship with Vodafone in Europe allows us to offer mobile gamers the highest-quality original content Square Enix is famous for," said Yoichi Wada, president of Square Enix. "We will work hard to continue releasing ground-breaking entertainment through the industry-leading Vodafone Live! multimedia offering."

NOKIA TAKES A TUMBLE

SALES AND SHARE PRICES DROP FOR FINLAND'S MOBILE GIANT

Creator of the N-Gage and all-round mobile expert Nokia took a hit last month when it announced a significant fall in worldwide sales. Figures were down for the three-month period ending 30 June, causing the Finnish company to rethink its end-of-year estimates.

Although the unfortunate news was offset by reports of a 14 per cent increase in profit for the quarter, the 5.7 per cent drop in revenue caused a massive 16 per cent drop in the company's shares and led to fears that the slump could extend throughout the rest of the financial year. Despite this, Nokia has shown no intention of pulling out of the gaming market and is showcasing much of the N-Gage's upcoming software line-up at the Edinburgh International Games Festival.

Visitors to the festival, which runs until 22 August, will be able to play titles such as *Crash Nitro Kart* and *Operation Shadow*, as well as SEGA's ambitious massively multiplayer mobile title, *Pocket Kingdom*.

Nokia has also launched a Judith Chalmers-fronted N-Gage QD ad campaign, advising us 'not to leave home without it'.

HE'S ONE OF THE MOST WELL-KNOWN DEVELOPERS IN THE INDUSTRY, HE INTRODUCED US TO EARTHWORM JIM, AND HE DOESN'T WEAR A BANDANA. DAVE PERRY IS ALREADY A GAMING LEGEND, BUT NOW HE'S GOT HIS WORK CUT OUT TRYING TO SAVE THE MATRIX…



"I STILL FEEL LUCKY TO THINK THAT I GET TO MAKE GAMES FOR A LIVING AND CHARGE GAME-PLAYING TO MY TAXES"

DAVE PERRY, SHINY ENTERTAINMENT

SHINY ENTERTAINMENT

DAVE PERRY

The sun is beating down on Shiny Entertainment's California office; inside, the team is hard at work on the follow-up to 2003's *Enter The Matrix,* which received a mixed critical response. *The Matrix* is arguably no longer the hottest movie licence in town after the lukewarm response to the film sequels, and Shiny's (not to mention parent company Atari's) bank balance depends on rekindling interest in a fading franchise, but Shiny president and co-founder Dave Perry has never been worried by what his detractors think. "Reviewers have their own feelings on what is a good game," he says. "It tends to be way off from what the average gamer wants – they want complexity, normal gamers want simplicity. We end up getting pulled both ways. We focused on the gamers and we ended up with the number-one movie game of 2003, so I still stand by that decision. Were we happy with the final output? Would we have changed anything? Always. That's what keeps this job interesting."

In 2002 Shiny became a wholly owned subsidiary of Atari in a $47 million deal – a far cry from its beginnings as the 'little company that wanted to make games for SEGA'. Perry formed Shiny in 1993 after leaving Virgin Games where he'd overseen development of *Cool Spot* and *Aladdin*. Prior to that, Perry grew up in Northern Ireland, moving to London to develop games for the likes of Mikro-Gen, Mirrorsoft and US Gold. Shiny's breakthrough project was a quirky platformer starring a talking worm and a psychotic crow. The character of Earthworm Jim was the brainchild of illustrator Doug TenNapel who impressed Perry with his ideas. "I liked it so much I made it our first project," says Perry. "It was the last game at Shiny that I was the lead programmer on. From that point forward I went to the dark side and became a manager, running the company."

The *Earthworm Jim* series racked up millions of sales worldwide, spawning sequels and several lucrative licensing deals including action figures, comic books and a television cartoon series. We may even see Jim launching cows on a PS3. "I would love to make another *Earthworm Jim* game, but not until I get a gap in our schedule – it's crazy, but we are booked to January 2006 already," explains Perry.

As one of the most well-known figures in electronic entertainment (he sits on the advisory board of the Game Developers' Conference and uses his personal website to offer advice to aspiring programmers and developers), Perry has some strong opinions about the direction gaming is taking, particularly when it comes to violence. "Videogames often put you into dangerous situations," he explains. "Not because we are trying to make people more violent – we do it because when you are in a dangerous situation, you feel challenged, concerned and you need to fight for your survival. It's more fun than being in a predictable safe environment. Violence is, has been, and always will be a part of society, especially when people feel desperate and can see no other way to settle a dispute. I would rather put a videogame in their reach than a gun any day."

With this in mind, it's perhaps not surprising that some of Perry's favourite games aren't shy of spilling a bit of claret, though he likes these titles for other reasons. "I like games that give you the sense of freedom, games that make you feel like you are there," he says. "My favourites recently were *Grand Theft Auto*, *Call Of Duty* and *Battlefield 1942*. I wish we had made *Battlefield 1942*. We did make an exterior multi-player game called *Sacrifice*. It won 42 industry awards, but it was definitely not for those 'normal' gamers; *Battlefield* was. I feel they did an amazing job, and also made it accessible so that I can challenge friends that are not hardcore gamers."

How different Perry's life would have been had he stuck to his original career choice – dentistry. "I still feel lucky to this day to think that I get to make games for a living and am able to charge game-playing to my taxes," he says. "Shiny is doing well, our last production was a number-one bestseller and our company has survived for over 10 years." With fast cars, Californian sunshine and a dream job, you have to wonder if Perry ever thinks he's in the Matrix, rather than making the games…

MACS POWER

EVIL RUMOURS THAT THE MAC IS A FLAWED PLATFORM FOR GAMING ARE UNTRUE – IF YOU LOOK CLOSER, IT'S NOT DIFFICULT TO SEE THAT APPLE'S LATEST CREATIONS ARE UP THERE WITH SOME OF THE BEST GAMING MACHINES AROUND…

There's no getting away from it – the Mac has a reputation for being terrible when it comes to playing games. There are a number of reasons for this, although the fact that a lot of people seem to think that Apple's machines are somehow technically inferior as games systems seems to be due to either prejudice or ignorance, rather than based on fact. Unfortunately, like most of the problems faced by Apple, it's really just a matter of market share. For all its style and innovation (something that even the most clueless computer user can appreciate), the Mac still only has about a five per cent share of the personal computer market. Because of this, many games companies just don't think it's worth the effort to release games for the Mac. So we're here to convince you that not only do Mac games exist, but they're pretty good, too…

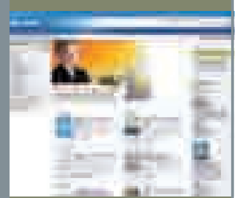
MACS ARE GAME

"ONLY A PERSON WITH **NO TASTE** COULD FAIL TO FIND THE LATEST LINE IN MACS UNATTRACTIVE – BUT THEY'RE **APPEALING UNDERNEATH** TOO"

Because of Apple's tiny market share, you rarely see a decent selection of Mac games in the shops. There are actually quite a few good Mac games out there, but stores make more money from filling the shelves with PC and console games. Admittedly, the situation has improved in recent years, as the success of the iMac has encouraged a number of developers to produce Mac versions of their games, and firms like Aspyr and Feral are successfully licensing games and porting them to the Mac. The games that do appear on the Mac tend to be the cream of the crop, so the quality is pretty good even if the quantity isn't.

If you're a keen gamer then the only real advice is simply to buy the best Mac you can afford as modern, graphics-hungry games need a powerful machine to run properly. The first issue you'll need to address is the speed of your Mac's CPU (central processing unit) – this is the chip that controls the entire system. Recent game releases need a processor with a minimum speed of 700-800MHz, and you're going to need at least 1GHz if you want a machine that will be able to cope with the games that are likely to come out over the next year or so. The fastest Macs right now are the G5 Power Mac models – they boast dual 64-bit processors that can run at up to 2.5GHz. A dual-processor machine would be nice if you could afford it, but they're expensive and not essential for playing games. The current single-processor model running at 1.6GHz would be fine.

The rest of the Mac range – including all iMacs, eMacs, and laptops – use the older G4 processor. This is perfectly adequate for playing games as long as it's running at around 800MHz. However, anything slower than this will really start to struggle with recent games such as *Halo* or *Unreal Tournament 2004*. The current versions of all these machines start at 1GHz or higher, so you're fine if you're buying a new machine, but anything slower than this is less than ideal. If you've got an old PowerMac, you might want to buy a processor upgrade – these generally cost £300-500, and run at speeds of 1GHz or more. However, you can buy a 1.25GHz eMac for just £549, so you're probably better off just biting the bullet and getting a new machine. The iMac, eMac and laptop Macs can't be upgraded at all, so any gaming aspirations might mean that you may just have to buy a new machine.



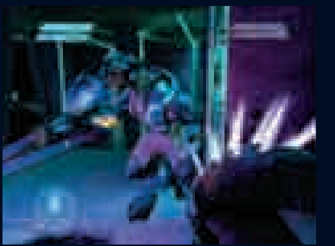
Turn to the dark side to get hold of some peripherals.

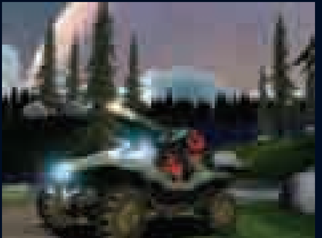


Logitech makes a range of Mac-compatible goodies.

GAMING TO THE MACS







HALO

Seeing as Bungie's FPS masterpiece was intended to be a Mac game in the first place, it seems strange it took *Halo* four years to make the not-so-massive journey from the Xbox to the Mac. Nonetheless, the game is now available for all Macintosh owners to enjoy and, thankfully, it manages to retain all the qualities that made it so popular on the Xbox, along with all the online functionality of the PC version. What more could you possibly need to help you change people's blinkered opinions of Mac gaming?

HANDY EQUIPMENT FOR THE BUDDING MAC GAMER

OUT OF THE BOX

Intellimouse Explorer (£39.99)

Apple's single-button mice are rubbish for playing games. If you want to do it properly, you'll need a decent mouse with at least two buttons, a scrolling wheel, and a nice solid grip like this Microsoft one. Oh, the irony.



Pure ZXR-200 (£39.99)

Sound effects and music obviously add a lot to the atmosphere of any game, so you'll need a decent set of speakers as well. Pure's ZXR-200 speakers are Mac compatible and provide good quality at a very competitive price.



Dual Action GamePad (£29.99)

Of course, some people prefer to do away with the mouse altogether and use a gamepad or joystick instead. Thankfully, Logitech is one of the few companies that makes Mac-compatible sticks and pads, and they're good quality too.



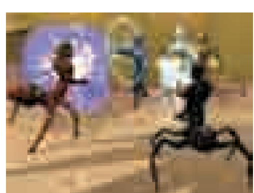
TRIED & TESTED

GAME TWO

Neverwinter Nights

Without a doubt, BioWare is one of the leading authorities on epic role-playing games – with titles like *Baldur's Gate* and *Knights Of The Old Republic* under its belt, you know you're onto a winner with a BioWare game. *Neverwinter Nights* demonstrates the developer's ability perfectly and offers countless hours of RPG goodness for those willing to put the time in. The effort's worth it…





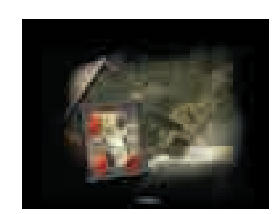
A QUALITY EXAMPLE OF RPG GAMING AT ITS BEST

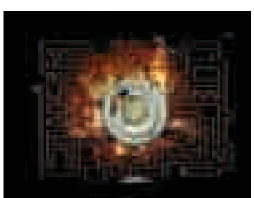
"THERE WAS A TIME WHEN MACINTOSH WAS THE BUZZ WORD AS FAR AS HOME COMPUTERS WENT… BUT HOW THINGS CHANGED"

GAME THREE

In Memoriam

Ubisoft's intricate and absorbing puzzle adventure didn't receive the appreciation it deserved, so now would be a good time to track down a copy – the twin PC/Mac discs make it relatively easy to find. By contrast, the game is far from easy and the task of tracking down the elusive and murderous Phoenix through twisted conundrums and intensive internet scouring is hard but ultimately satisfying.



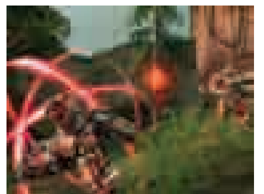


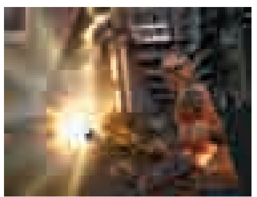
TENSE, CHALLENGING AND GRIPPING TO THE VERY END

GAME FOUR

Unreal Tournament 2004

Epic's latest instalment in the *UT* series delivers all you could have wanted from the series and more besides. Whether it's the thrill of arena-based combat, the fast-paced movement of Assault mode, the more strategic Double Domination, the bizarre sport-styled Bombing Run or even the unique feel of Onslaught's missions, there's something for everyone. Well, everyone who's got a Mac, that is.





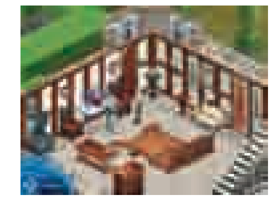
AS FRANTIC AND EXCITING AN FPS AS THEY COME

"THE NEW GENERATION OF APPLE MACHINES HAS HELPED PUT THE COMPANY BACK ON THE MAP IN TODAY'S MARKET"

GAME FIVE

The Sims

While it's only to be expected that some may have already tired of EA's long-running people-management series, we know plenty of gamers who are still running the lives of their pixelated populous. Never-ending expansion packs aside, this really is the game that keeps on giving… if only because you can't fail to be entertained by the sometimes bizarre, often touching antics of your own Sims.

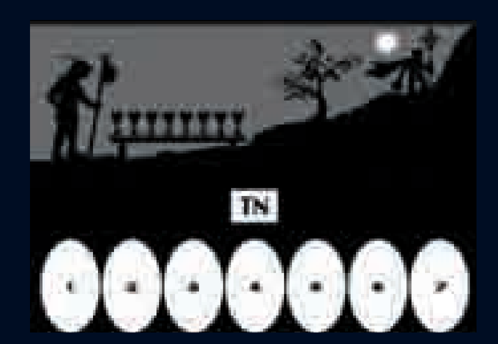




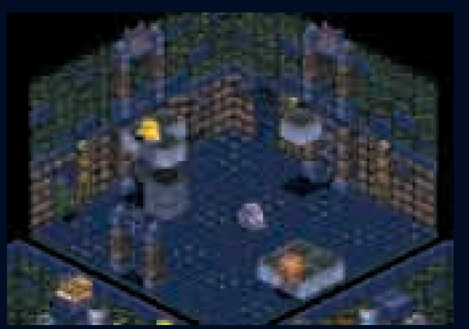
AMAZINGLY DEEP FOR SOMETHING SO SIMPLE

SHARE AND SHARE ALIKE

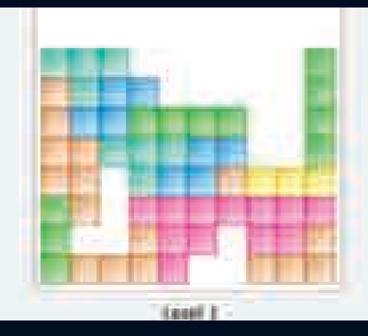
Some great examples of Mac gaming you can download for free



The Fool's Errand (www.fools-errand.com)
This the original metapuzzle videogame and it's challenging enough to keep anyone scratching their head, even though it's now over 20 years old.



Head Over Heels (retrospec.sgn.net/games/hoh)
Easily one of the best games produced for the Spectrum, this Mac version is a faithfully updated version of the original.



Quinn (www.macgamefiles.com)
A Mac version of the classic puzzler *Tetris*. It's also got a network option so that several players can see who's best, but you will need OS X v.10.2 to run it.

FLASHBACK

WAY BACK WHEN, WE REMEMBER APPLE BEING A FAR STRONGER BRAND THAN IT IS TODAY – EVEN BEFORE IT DISCOVERED TANGERINE MACHINE CASINGS…

A Brief History Of Time

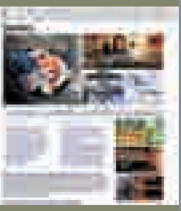
Those of you who know your technological history will appreciate that the Mac hasn't always played the second fiddle it does today. Back in the early Eighties, the predecessor to the Mac was the Apple II – the machine was a huge success in the US and there was no shortage of games for it. In fact, going back even further, Apple supremo Steve Jobs worked at Atari in the early Seventies, where one of his first assignments was to work on a game called *Breakout*. When he needed some help he called in friend Steve Wozniak to help him out, and it was Wozniak who would go on to set up Apple with Jobs a few years later.

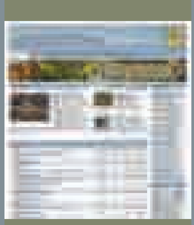
Ironically, many important figures in the modern games industry got started with the Apple II – the most famous probably being John Carmack, the programming genius at id Software responsible for the *Doom* and *Quake* games. Carmack wrote a number of games for the Apple II, including the almighty *Castle Wolfenstein*. As we all know, it was this forerunner of *Doom* and *Quake* that set the template for gun-toting 3D action games and is still influencing the titles that dominate the industry today. Carmack still seems to have a soft spot for the Mac, and id Software has continued to release Mac versions of most of its games over the years.

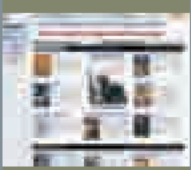
Unfortunately, Apple blew it in the late Eighties. It allowed Microsoft's Windows to dominate the computer industry and Apple's market share gradually dwindled to five per cent, where it's still languishing. The die-hards that still clung to their Macs tended to be professional users – designers, illustrators and photographers who used the Mac in their work, but weren't terribly interested in playing games. By the mid-Nineties, there was little reason for games companies to pay any attention to the Mac at all.

Thankfully, the arrival of the iMac changed all that. Released in 1998, the machine proved a huge success (possibly through a combination of outstanding design and competent ability) and pretty much managed to save Apple from total extinction. Most importantly, though, it became a success in the consumer market, attracting many home users to the Macintosh world for the first time. Suddenly, there were millions of people with an iMac at home and games companies started to include the Mac in their plans once more. To be fair, it is still fairly low down the list, trailing along after the PC and PlayStation, but at least Apple is back on the gaming map.

"WITH **HIGH-CLASS ABILITIES** IN BOTH GAMING AND **MORE CONVENTIONAL WORK FIELDS,** MACS SHOULD BE GRACING FAR MORE DESKS THAN THEY DO"


Apple's site – official, but still well worth a look.


Tons of files ready for the budding Mac gamer.


Plenty of games to buy at reasonable prices.


Find Mac games and a thriving online community.

CAUGHT IN THE NET

THE BEST PLACES ON THE INTERNET FOR ALL YOUR MAC GAMING NEEDS

APPLE GAMES

www.apple.com/uk/games

■ Unsurprisingly, given the machine's sudden resurgence, Apple has become rather keen on promoting the games market these days. That's probably why it has its own web pages with information on all the latest Mac games available, as well as previews of up-and-coming titles. It also includes plenty of free downloadable demo versions of games, many of which you can buy directly from the wesbite if you want them.

MAC GAME FILES

www.macgamefiles.com

■ Mac Game Files is simply the best site for finding free game demos, patches and updates (outside Apple's official site), as well as an extensive selection of shareware games. You can also find a huge amount of cheats and downloadable tools that allow you to modify games.

MAC GOLD

www.macgold.co.uk

■ Possibly one of the most popular websites around for buying Macintosh games. Prompt, secure delivery and some relatively good prices on all the latest games – as well as an incredibly good selection of older games covering all the main gaming genres – make it the first-stop shop for any Mac gamer.

GAME RANGER

www.gameranger.com

■ Game Ranger's Scott Kevill is an absolute hero among Mac gamers. During the dark days of Mac gaming, his website was the only place to go for information about playing Mac games online, and even today it's still a hugely important part of the Mac gaming community. The place to go if you're looking for Mac gamers around the world.

gamesTM USA REPORT

LETTER FROM AMERICA

WITH YOUR FRIENDLY EX-PATRIOT, THE SHAPE

"SPEAKING AS A MAN WHO ONCE SMUGGLED A PLAYSTATION ALONG ISLAND, IT COULD BE SAID I'M NOT THE WORLD'S



Head due north for irony, rational thought and great bacon.

Tomorrow, Mrs Shape and I abandon the States like a burning barge and plunge into the soothing depths of Canada. As the thermometer bubbles, everyone else is throwing the tarp off their grills, erecting gazebos and purchasing inadvisable shorts, while I am rocketing north as fast as a rental car can carry me, in search of drier air and a kinder sun. And some of that awesome bacon. Also, no-one will get shot for a couple of weeks, so that'll be a thrill. No games, though, not a one. I'm not even bringing the Game Boy.

Speaking as a man who once smuggled a PlayStation along on a romantic break to an idyllic island, along with a copy of *Bust-A-Move 2* (it just came out that week… what was I supposed to do? Eh?), it could be said that I am not the most emotionally sensitive geek in the world. Fair enough. But I'm learning, and I believe it would be a 'Bad Idea' to sneak anything more distracting than a digicam on this retreat. As such, I've been in something of a rental frenzy over the last month, hitting all the new releases that would otherwise be taunting my feeble psyche while out of the loop on what I am learning to call a 'vacation'.

And you know what? It's just as well. Are these new games solely written for short-term amnesia patients? That is, what do you do with a $50-plus-tax game after you beat it in under ten hours? How much fun is it the next day, unless you're lucky enough to have brain damage like Drew Barrymore in that movie? Politically perfectly timed/abysmally timed Middle East troop shifter *Full Spectrum Warrior* was over in a jiffy, just clambering out of boot camp simplicity and into real, harrowing, tell-Debbie-I-love-her combat by level ten, with the credits rolling after level 12. It was impeccably executed, with that second-nature interface making outsmarting a dim enemy all the more ruthlessly efficient, but it could have done with 50 more levels. If it had been an old isometric point-and-click, kind of like a real-time-strategy version of Krisalis's 1992 Amiga outing *Sabre Team*, it would have had those damn levels, too. Grumble.

Let's not even get into *Chronicles Of Riddick*, that most absorbing and beautiful of first-person shooters which has already gone all the way to third base, and is, in fact, falling asleep in the car before you even get to the restaurant. Again, some incredible work, tragically impossible to recommend as anything other than a rental. Then *Driv3r*, which has alr3ady, l3t's say, 'inspir3d' mor3 than 3nough column inch3s. Suffice to say that in the US, which no longer enjoys the same liberal 'take it back if it sucks' policy of British stores, the only safe way to make up your own mind was with a r3ntal.

But then God saw me, or it might have been David Hasselhoff, but they looked down and, parting the clouds above Tommy K's reasonably priced rental store, did place upon my bony fingers Midway's quite-surprising-really-after-*SpyHunter-2* mind-bender *Psi-Ops: Operation Mindgate*. And I did get to the

ON A ROMANTIC BREAK TO AN IDYLLIC MOST EMOTIONALLY SENSITIVE GEEK"

bosses and find them too hard to beat the game in five days. And I did enjoy chucking men down precipices (precipi?) and into fiery barrels with but the power of my will. And thus the proper order of things was restored, a rental sufficiently whetting the appetite, leading to a sale.

Not being a fan of jump-and-collect PS2 stars Jak & Ratchet & Daxter & Clank, I'll admit that the first thing that comes to mind when considering American-developed games is rubbish like *Arctic Thunder*, all exaggerated attitude and posturing, but with an end-user excitement quota similar to that of a Debra Winger TV movie about domestic violence. The attention to detail in *Psi-Ops*, the possibilities its flexible world offers, the way it wholly embraces rather than nervously survives its Havok physics system – all of that put the frosting back on my chocolate cake.

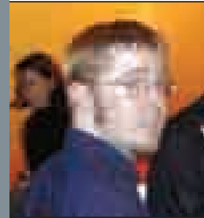
The fact that an internal Midway team put in this kind of effort, in the face of the current Euro softco dominance, is heartening. I'm certainly going to miss heaving bodies off buildings and forcing guards to commit suicide while I'm away. Unless I visit any museums, anyway. Ho ho! No, that was a joke. Actually, I haven't got a single thing packed. See you later.

Many thanks



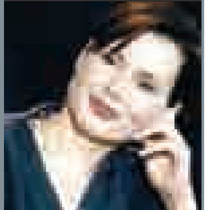
MISS ABOUT BRITAIN…

mart@games™



LOVE ABOUT AMERICA…

Inside The Actor's Studio





Full Spectrum Warrior: short but satisfying.



WANT ANY QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY THE SHAPE? THEN DROP HIM A LINE AT: theshape@comcast.net HE MIGHT LISTEN, IF YOU'RE LUCKY

AMERIKAAN

PRODUCTS, PLACES, SERVICES AND EVENTS FROM THE LAND OF THE FREE

BROILER



The 'broiler' is what we new-world invading limeys call the 'grill' in our oven. But here, the grill is the barbecue out back in the yard. So they renamed the real grill. And things from the supermarket tell you to "broil" them. Which means grill them. If you follow.

US MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

	Title	Publisher	Format
1	Driv3r	Atari	Multi
2	Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow	Ubisoft	Multi
3	Red Dead Revolver	Rockstar	Multi
4	Spider-Man 2	Activision	Multi
5	NBA Ballers	Midway	Multi
6	Shadow Ops: Red Mercury	Atari	Multi
7	Showdown: Legends Of Wrestling	Acclaim	Multi
8	The Chronicles Of Riddick	Vivendi	Multi
9	Shrek 2	Activision	Multi
10	Hitman: Contracts	Eidos	Multi

(Updated 19/7/04)



Pandora Tomorrow

Driv3r

KONGETSU*

WITH JAPANESE CORRESPONDENT TIM ROGERS

"I WONDERED IF THE DONKEY KONGA CONTROLLER HAD BEEN MOVES, THEN REALISED IT WAS JUST BEING MISUSED FOR

It seems that there's a *Donkey Konga 2* coming out tomorrow. Tomorrow, as I write this, is 1 July 2004. *Donkey Konga* came out in January of this year. I wonder what the record is for fewest months elapsed between Nintendo game sequels? I have the internet at my fingertips here. I should try to look it up.

I don't know if you could call *Donkey Konga 2* a 'sequel', anyway. The commercial calls it *Donkey Konga 2: Hit Song Parade*. It has some popular Japanese pop songs in it, including Ai Otsuka's *Ai no Sakuranbou* (*Cherries Of Love*) and Orange Range's *Viva Rock*, a song I despise. Think American rap-rock with a layer of American pop-punk spread across the top. It's not like a soup, it's like a salad – all of the elements remain distinct, and distinctly unnerving.

All the more unnerving is the use of the patented *Donkey Konga* drum controller in the commercial. A few chubby-cheeked, big-eared schoolgirls (big ears are in this summer, I've observed) smile and dance and hit the drums along to *Ai no Sakuranbou*. Then we get a line of prancing Japanese pop-boys dancing and spinning in front of a row of drums, while the on-screen monkeys clap and beat their on-screen bongos. At first I wondered if Namco had ingeniously designed the controller's microphone to degrade as it does (sometimes triggering a clap even when you're just lightly tapping a drum or the start button) so that it would be able to motion-detect swirling dance moves in the sequel. Of course not, it's just misrepresenting the method of using the controller for the sake of making a hip commercial.

This is a stupid thing to get miffed about, I know. Knowing this, however, I still brought it up with a Japanese friend. This was during my favourite television drama series about old men, during which the commercial runs every Saturday night. Seeing the commercial, she clapped her hands at the Orange Range song proclaiming: "I love this song." "WHY?" I asked her. "I don't know. I like the beginning. It reminds me of *Famicom Wars*." I thought – ahh, yes. The song begins with a militaristic-sounding man calling out "Do you know of the Ooorange Range?!" in a way that mirrors the voice that screamed "Do you know of the Famicom Waaars?!" in the marching-military-men-filled *Famicom Wars* commercial in 1987. I shook my head at the fact that Japanese people's knowledge of the rich tradition that is the American military marching chant stems entirely from an old commercial.

"I read your thing on your website – about the new *Wars* game, the one you played at E3. You said it sucks," she said. "It's, like, a third-person shooter? Why change the formula when



If DK himself can use the controller properly, how hard can it be?



TEACH YOURSELF JAPANESE

LESSON TWENTY TWO: UNDERSTANDING JAPANESE POP MUSIC

Kimi no soba ni iru kara…	Because I'm by your side…
Nani mo kowakunai…	I'm not afraid of anything…
Hitoribocchi ni naritakunai…	I don't want to be(come) alone…
Anata ga inaku nareba…	If you go away…
Anata no genkan ni shinu shika shouga nai	I'll have no choice other than to die on your doorstep

MODIFIED TO DETECT DANCE THE SAKE OF A HIP ADVERT"

all the previous games were exactly the same?" She counted on her fingers. "*Famicom Wars*, *Game Boy Wars*, *Super Famicom Wars* – was there a *Super Famicom Wars*? – and then *Advance Wars*. Why make *Cube Wars* so different?" I was about to point out to her how *Cube Wars* actually retains the *Advance Wars* title in the West. I didn't, though, because I was watching a commercial for *Donkey Konga 2*, which uses the same engine as its predecessor, plus a few dozen new songs, and I understood something about franchises: short unchanging ones starring old characters; old and name-changing ones starring nobody really important.

What that something is, I realised, is two-headed and hard to get a handle on. I think it's probably proof that franchises don't have to evolve to stay popular – people will buy it anyway, without even looking at what they're buying. The *Donkey Konga 2* boxart isn't on the website, 12 hours before launch. It just says 'Now Printing'. I only hope my microphone stays how it is.

Kind regards



USING YOUR HANDS

What's the deal with the misuse of the drums in the adverts for *Donkey Konga 2*? Seeing it, I thought back to all the Hollywood movies I'd seen, and how no actor who played games was able to hold a controller correctly. They say directors don't make actors eat during meal scenes because if they have to reshoot it could prove a little painful for the stomach. What about holding a damned videogame controller, though? Can't they let them loose on a real game, to make the acting more authentic? Someone on the crew has to have a console at home. I always figured Japanese directors would be better about this sort of thing. They're not. There's as much bobbing and weaving and unnatural controller-shaking in Japanese movies as there is in the west. Useless.



JAPANESE MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

	Title	Publisher	Format
1	Let's Make J-League Pro Soccer Club! '04	SEGA	PS2
2	Pachinko Slot! Fist Of The North Star	Sammy	PS2
3	Gacha Mech Stadium Saru Batore	SCEJ	PS2
4	Donkey Konga 2	Nintendo	GC
5	Xenosaga Episode 2	Namco	PS2
6	Doka Pon DX	Asmik	PS2
7	Pikmin 2	Nintendo	GC
8	Famicom Mini: Gambare Goemon! Karakuri Douchu	Nintendo	GBA
9	Bokujyo Story: For Girl	Marvelous	GC
10	DQC: Torneko's Great Adventure 3	Square-Enix	GBA

(Updated 11/7/04 © 2004 Media Create Co. Ltd. All Rights Reserved)


J-League Pro Soccer

Gacha Mech Stadium

"THIS INDUSTRY IS VERY TOUGH – THERE ARE TIMES WHEN BEING BACK IN BANKING LOOKS VERY GOOD"

RAND MILLER, CYAN WORLDS

RAND MILLER

CYAN WORLDS

There are few people who can honestly say that they have given birth to an entire world. Fewer still can say that they have created multiple worlds and that each is a fully realised, beautiful and challenging place that millions of people around the globe have enjoyed exploring. Rand Miller, creator of the *Myst* series, is one of these few.

"It started as far back as 1987 when Robyn, my brother, and I did our first world," Miller recalls. "I [said] that we should make a children's computer game that's like a good children's book because even adults like reading a good children's book. He drew the first page of the book, and the intention was that it would be interactive – there was to be a little story and then it would be time to turn the page. As it turned out, there was no need to turn the page – that first page eventually turned into a whole world, there was no need for a book. That was, in my mind, probably the most revolutionary thing we did; from there we just evolved."

For those who have indulged in any of the *Myst* games, the reference to books containing worlds will not be unfamiliar and it's easy to see the connection between these early ideas and the now well-established series. "We started to draw a map of Myst Island before there was much story at all," Miller explains. "And the map started to feed the story and in turn the story started to feed gameplay. It's hard to put your finger on a key concept that really inspired everything."

When the first game was released in 1994, it was obvious that it was going to be a hit. "There are two things that appeal about *Myst*," Miller says. "The first is that anyone can play it so easily, there's never a real risk of someone not being able to complete it – just click a mouse and you move through the world. The second is just how far you can go without having to solve puzzles. I think there was a large contingent of people who never even got off Myst Island because the island was fun and you could wander around and see amazing things. A lot of people who bought the game probably didn't even like solving puzzles."

Another aspect that drew the masses toward the series is the fact that the early *Myst* titles boasted some of the best artwork ever seen in a videogame. "You can't make our style of game without the artwork," Miller points out. "The artwork is the actual draw of the game. There's a natural human desire to explore and you always wonder what's around the next corner. You have to see things that pull you into the world. *Myst* is described as a puzzle game but it's actually two games in one. To me the essence isn't the puzzles, it's the place."

This desire to discover new worlds is what drives Miller's passion for videogames. His first contact with software was working in the computer department of a bank – "I quit that to write games," he explains – but he'd always had a love for escapist gaming. "I grew up craving videogames, they were few and far between when I was young. I cut my teeth on games like *Zork*, which was hugely influential. That was the first time I felt that a game had taken me somewhere else, even though it was just text. It was a very unique feeling"

As successful as the *Myst* series has been, there have been times of trouble. Last year's plan to bring *Myst* online in *Uru: Ages Beyond Myst* didn't go as well as hoped, which has proved a great disappointment for Miller. "The cancellation of *Uru* was really difficult for us," he explains. "It was an experiment of sorts." So with the industry insisting that online gaming is the future, will we see another attempt to get *Myst* online? "We don't necessarily want to look at online again, we'll see if we get any inspiration in the future," Miller says. "*Uru* was something we poured a lot of heart into and I don't know if we have the heart to jump into that again."

There may be more worries ahead, though. The point-and-click puzzle genre has been drying up recently and this could affect sales of the forthcoming *Myst IV: Revelation*. "Frankly, I'm not worried," says Miller. "I think that this aspect of interactive gaming is one area that's ready for more innovation. Our series of games are based on a story and there's an idea of exploring a world. This is an idea that's still in its infancy, it's still very early on and there's still a lot of room for innovation."

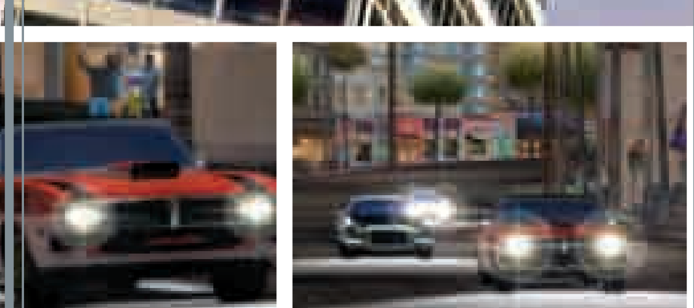
Myst IV: Revelation *is due out in September and is previewed on page 72.*



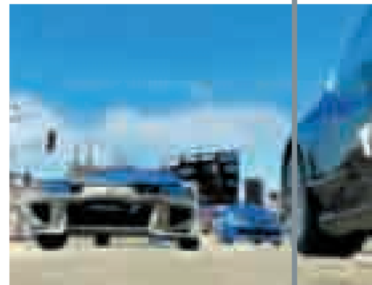
SO YOU'VE GOT YOUR OWN CAR, PERHAPS. OR MAYBE EVEN YOUR OWN HOUSE. BIG DEAL. RAND MILLER'S INVENTED HIS OWN WORLD. WE CAUGHT UP WITH THE MYST CREATOR TO DISCUSS ONLINE GAMING, CHILDREN'S BOOKS AND WHY LOOKS ARE IMPORTANT…

COMMUNITY

EVERY ISSUE, **games™** VISITS A DIFFERENT DEVELOPER. THIS MONTH WE'RE OFF TO EXOTIC WARRINGTON TO MEET JUICE GAMES







IT MAY HAVE BEEN BITTEN ONCE, BUT THE TEAM AT JUICE GAMES ISN'T SHY ABOUT ANSWERING SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT LIFE, GAMES, PRIMA DONNAS AND ITS NEW STREET-RACING TITLE

JUICE GAMES



Early in 2003, the studio name 'Rage' became sadly appropriate. The British company went under, meaning the games industry had lost a talented developer. As fate would have it, however, the industry gained a new team of former Rage staff with plenty of fresh ideas and a battle-hardened insight into the negative side of business. Juice Games was formed, with Don Whiteford becoming the director, Richard Badger the lead designer and Colin Bell the managing director. And the studio has just unleashed its first title, street-racer *Juiced*.

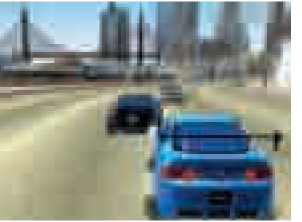
Not wishing to dwell on the failure of Rage, a company that had all but finished the anticipated Xbox racer

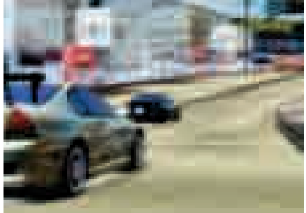
Based in Warrington, Cheshire, Juice Games currently employs about 30 staff, double the size of the team when the studio was formed last year.



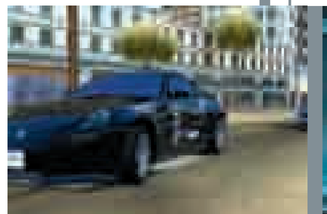


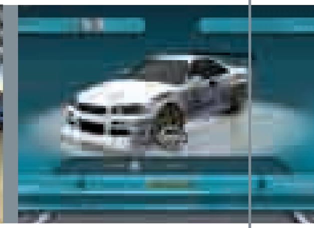
The staff at Juice Games have been hand-picked because of their creative flair and affinity with the rest of the team – "prima donnas are out" says Don Whiteford.







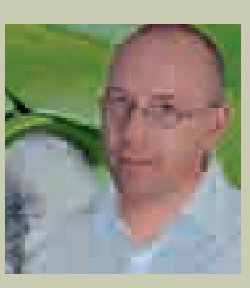




Lamborghini, the team picked up the pieces and started to plan for the future. "We immediately began work on the *Juiced* game concept," explains Badger. "In fact, on my very first day at Juice Games we held a design concept meeting in some offices that we were literally borrowing at the time. During that meeting we brainstormed nearly all of the features that are in the final game." The team was back to business as usual, and had the added bonus of many of the developers having worked together for the past few years.

The unfortunate cancellation of *Lamborghini* lay in factors beyond the company's control, and licensing was at the heart of the matter. However, the game engine and racing mechanics were cutting-edge, and it must have been tempting for the team to appropriate the code, or its knowledge of it, and reapply this to its concept street-racer, *Juiced*. However, as Badger explains, this just wasn't possible and the fledgling company had the added frustration of being in possession of a perfectly good game that simply couldn't be released. "Nothing of that technology was able to be used in *Juiced*," he says. "However, we knew that in keeping the team together we could produce a better technology and a better game. I think you'll agree that *Juiced* represents this well." It seems to be increasingly important to keep hold of talent, as the smaller studios can't afford to make mistakes in the cut-throat gaming industry. Whiteford explains that "everyone at Juice has one thing in common – creative talent, no matter what their background. Any new staff are carefully hand-picked to blend into the team – prima donnas are out, no matter how good they think they are; it's all about teamwork." The current team stands at 30, double the number of staff than when Juice Games was formed. However, this number is still a small one when you consider the hundreds of people employed on projects of a similar size.

Having lost the *Burnout* series to EA, Acclaim is pinning its hopes on Juice Games' mod-heavy racing title, and so the game is essentially a triple-A title for the publisher. The weight of expectation is hanging over Juice Games, and although its expertise and know-how – cultivated through work on both *Lamborghini* and *Juiced* – is substantial, there must still be a tinge of worry for the small British developer. Colin Bell doesn't think there is. "The current climate of the games industry makes it a prerequisite that we plan ahead and best position ourselves for success," he says. "Juice is able to 'punch above its weight' because we have a rock-solid team and are able to add to our capacity at peak development times by outsourcing commodity work to UK and off-shore studios." Ah, that magical word 'outsourcing'. This seems to be a real trend with all developers at the moment, from the smallest houses such as Amuze, all the way up to Bungie, who recently pulled in some software mercenaries from FASA, another Microsoft Studio that is working on *Forza Motorsport*.



"SIMULATION IS WHAT WE DO BEST AND WE HAVE MANY IDEAS ABOUT WHERE TO PUSH THIS IN THE FUTURE"

DON WHITEFORD
JUICE GAMES

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO…?

The fallout from Rage's closure might have been messy, but its three biggest titles have helped spawn more than enough success for the future…

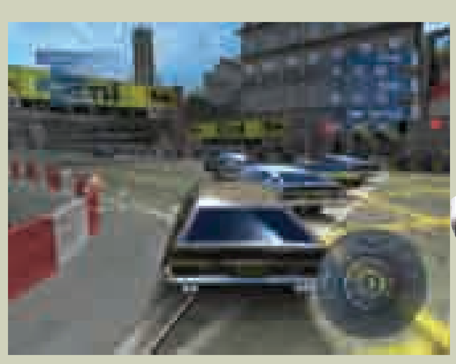
ROCKY (MULTI, 2002)

Rocky received much critical acclaim despite being a film tie-in, and the licensed boxing sim is still ranked by many as the top pugilism title for consoles. A franchise return is set for October as Venom Games (another ex-Rage studio) releases *Rocky Legends*, with even more boxing brilliance.



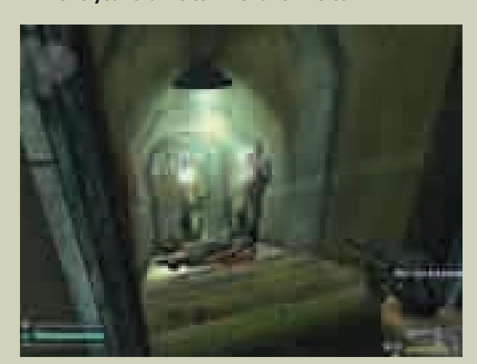
LAMBORGHINI (CANCELLED)

Lamborghini was the last game made by Rage before it was forced to close last year; a first-class racer that let you drive the world's fastest cars around track circuits. The Juice Games' team's experience with *Lamborghini* puts it in good stead for *Juiced*.



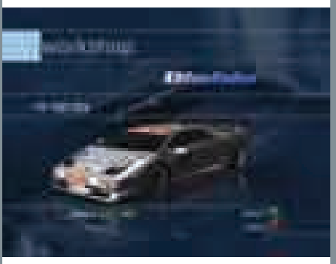
COLD WINTER (DUE Q4 '04)

Cold Winter is another ex-Rage title, now on the way from Swordfish Studios, which was formed in a similar fashion to Juice Games. Momentum for the title subsided in 2003, but is building again as the game is slated for a release this year thanks to Vivendi Universal.

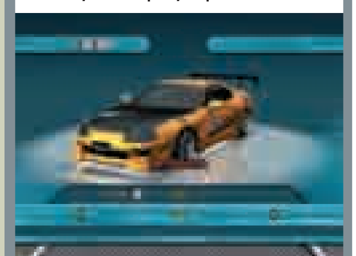


THE MOD SQUAD

Apparently there are 7.2 trillion ways to soup up your *Juiced* car…



Bored with the same old paintjob? Don't worry, there are plenty of options here.





Cold Winter – another game to be salvaged from the Rage wreckage.



PHYSICS IS FUN

Want to know exactly why the *Juiced* engine is not simply a modified version of the one used in *Lamborghini*? Well, in addition to many other things, it's all in the physics. "*Juiced* physics is a fully modular system with sophisticated friction modelling," explains Richard Badger. "We had to create this because *Juiced* essentially lets the user modify the physics by changing car components. The rendering uses a wholly new approach that enables one art team to prepare geometry for any platform we care to support, without making unnecessary compromises."

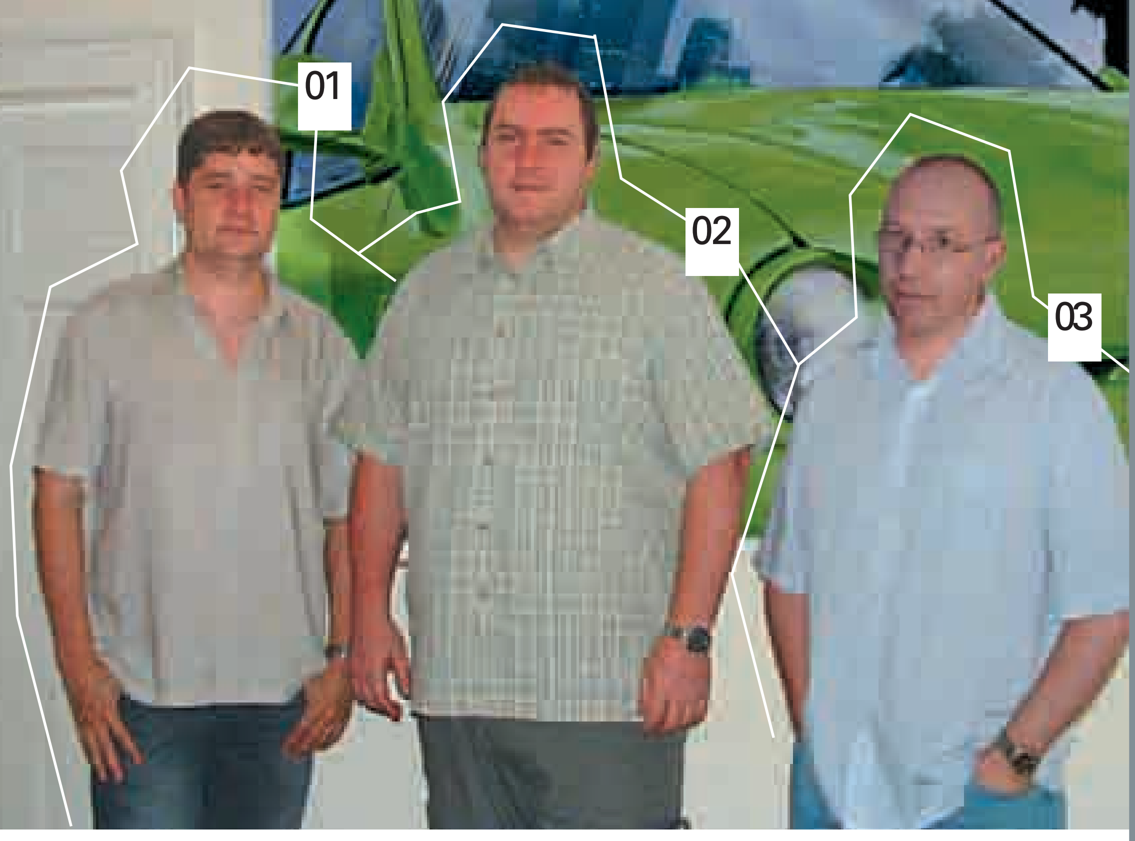
Essentially this has allowed the team to create PS2 and Xbox versions with the minimum of fuss, as the differing hardware would have struggled to allow the modifications brought about by the various parts used to tune each vehicle. Whereas the *Lamborghini* engine would have suited an Xbox version, a PS2 port may not have been able to keep up.



Juice Games is playing a smart game, and Whiteford sums up his vision of the future for the firm in a simple sentence: "Our objective is to establish major brands based on our own intellectual property, and work with publishers who are as passionate about our products as we are." Many of the developers at Juice have a strong background in the simulation genre, specifically flight games, so this could well be the direction the team takes. *Juiced* is a fulfilment of the work that was poured into *Lamborghini*, and the imminent sense of completion must be a massive event for the team. Conversely, it's a dead cert that a new project is in the works, as even the smallest developers have the capacity to work on several titles at once. We posed this to the team and Whiteford's reply is somewhat teasing. "Simulation is what we do best and we have many ideas about where to push this in the future," he says. "Of course, simulation doesn't just encompass driving or flying."

Juiced itself is a simulation of sorts, and the team is keen to stress that the engine is a massive step beyond the one that would have powered *Lamborghini*. Now the emphasis is on street racing, but beneath the surface there are plenty more modifications. "As far as *Juiced* goes, we wanted to make the whole gaming experience different," explains Whiteford. "*Juiced* is a non-linear game, like our flight sims' dynamic battlefield environments used to be, enabling the player to

With *Lamborghini* proving to be of such high quality (even though it was never released), there are high hopes for *Juiced*.



MEET THE JUICY BOYS

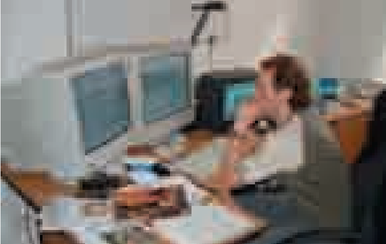
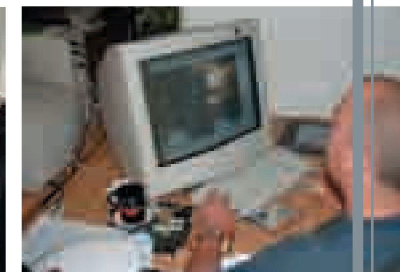
1 RICHARD BADGER, LEAD DESIGNER AND PROGRAMMER
IN A NUTSHELL: Badger has been in the industry for seven years, working on many titles at DID before moving to Juice Games.

2 COLIN BELL, MANAGING DIRECTOR
IN A NUTSHELL: After working on flight sims, Bell moved to the business side of the industry, co-founding Juice Games with Don Whiteford in 2003.

3 DON WHITEFORD, STUDIO MANAGER AND DIRECTOR
IN A NUTSHELL: Having worked for developers such Ocean and DID, Whiteford co-founded Juice Games last year.

"OUR OBJECTIVE IS TO ESTABLISH MAJOR BRANDS BASED ON OUR OWN INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY"

DON WHITEFORD, JUICE GAMES

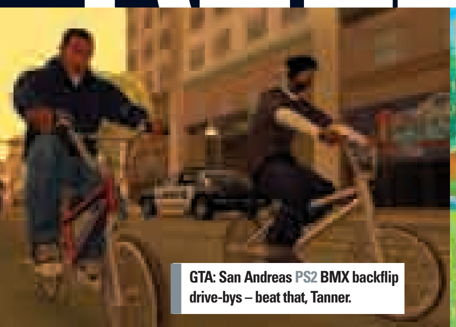




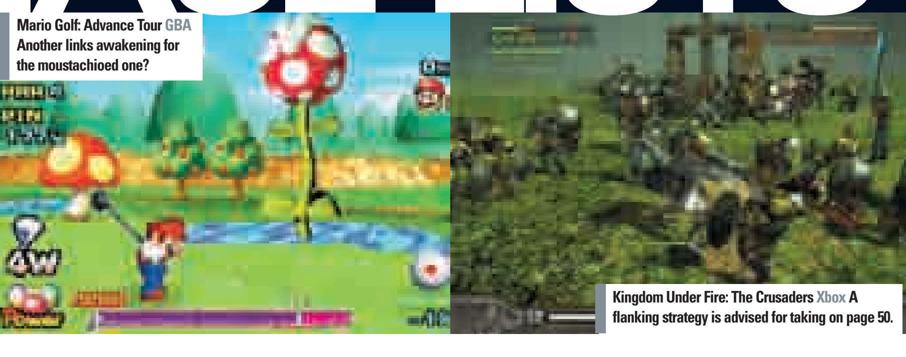

Having clawed its way back from the brink, Juice Games has built itself back up into a formidable studio.

develop their own strategy for success." We've heard this before in relation to racing titles, but *Juiced* could well be a significant step for the genre when the team's flight-sim experience is taken into account. It has an incredibly fresh take on exactly what constitutes driving simulation, and when selling a car-modding title to a nation that bought more copies of *Need For Speed: Underground* than any other game last year, this becomes an essential quality. "Simulation is not just about having realistic physics, it's also about re-creating the environment, the atmosphere, the racing energy and the believability of the whole scenario," comments Whiteford. "As a good example, what we've done with our diSTRESS AI system is to recreate the real-life racing situation whereby AI drivers have an over-riding emotion that affects their driving ability, so competing drivers can be forced into errors by 'tail-gating' or can have a surge of adrenaline if you drive aggressively." This game is definitely a million miles from *Lamborghini*, and may well give the next *Need For Speed* a good race to the finish line.

This must be an incredibly rewarding moment for the team that started in January last year with nothing solid to work with. Richard Badger points to this as being one of the proudest moments in his career. "We were standing at the foot of a mountain of work looking nervously toward the summit," he says. "All we had was an extremely talented team of guys with a lot of guts and determination. The past 18 months have flown by and we developed some really powerful gaming technology and our best game to date. A truly remarkable achievement, and one to be proud of." He's not wrong, as *Juiced* has been turning more and more heads as it inches closer to the shelves. With the simulation knowledge, business savvy and will to succeed where Rage failed, expect to see more of Juice Games in the future…

RELEASE LISTS


GTA: San Andreas PS2 BMX backflip drive-bys – beat that, Tanner.


Mario Golf: Advance Tour GBA Another links awakening for the moustachioed one?

Kingdom Under Fire: The Crusaders Xbox A flanking strategy is advised for taking on page 50.



games™ MOST PLAYED

BURNOUT 3: TAKEDOWN

Format: Xbox/PS2
Publisher: Electronic Arts

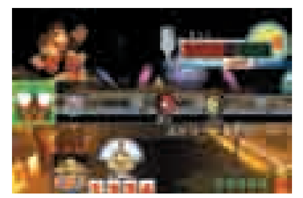
Harder, better, faster, stronger – *Burnout 3* is the glorious pile-up that occurs when Criterion's rock-solid gameplay hits EA production values head-on. We've racked up some 50 hours on a demo version of the game and fear the day the finished version falls through the door.



DONKEY KONGA 2: HIT SONG PARADE

Format: GameCube
Publisher: Nintendo

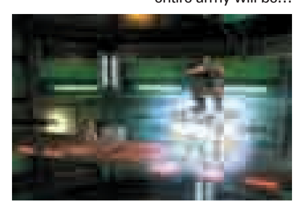
Pan-pan indeed. There's nothing quite so distressing as the sight of four grown men huddled around a purple console, all banging fake bongo drums with such vigour that you'd think their lives depended on it. Unfortunately, there's nothing quite so enjoyable either.

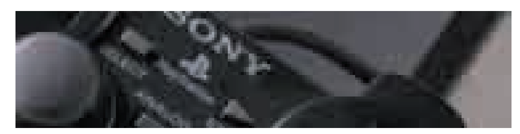


PSI-OPS: THE MINDGATE CONSPIRACY

Format: PS2/Xbox
Publisher: Midway

Pick up crate. Throw crate at man. Pick up man. Throw man at wall. Pull man towards you. Set man on fire. Possess man's body. Make man jump off building. Kick man several times. If dealing with one soldier can be this much fun, just imagine how enjoyable ruining an entire army will be…





PLAYSTATION2

Month	Title	Publisher	
AUGUST '04			
27 August	Airborne Troops	GMX	
TBC	Gametrak: Dark Wind	In2Games	
SEPTEMBER '04			
03 September	Combat Elite: Paratroopers Of WWII	Acclaim	
10 September	Burnout 3: Takedown	EA	Wanted
17 September	Conflict: Vietnam	SCi	
17 September	Madden NFL 2005	EA	
17 September	Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy	Midway	Wanted
24 September	Juiced	Acclaim	
24 September	Tiger Woods 2005	EA	
24 September	NHL 2005	EA	
24 September	Resident Evil Outbreak	Capcom	
TBC	Gradius V	Konami	
TBC	FlatOut	Empire	
TBC	Shellshock: Nam '67	Eidos	
TBC	Ribbit King	Atari	
TBC	Silent Hill 4: The Room	Konami	
TBC	McFarlane's Evil Prophecy	Konami	
TBC	Second Sight	Codemasters	
TBC	U Move Super Sports	Konami	
TBC	Crisis Zone	Sony	
TBC	Star Wars: Battlefront	Activision	Wanted
TBC	Colin McRae Rally 2005	Codemasters	
OCTOBER '04			
22 October	Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas	Rockstar	Wanted
22 October	Future Tactics	JoWood	
29 October	Rocky Legends	Ubisoft	
TBC	Killzone	Sony	
TBC	Dancing Stage Fusion	Konami	
TBC	FIFA 2005	EA	
TBC	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2	Konami	
TBC	Pro Evolution Soccer 4	Konami	
TBC	X-Men Legends	Activision	
TBC	Leisure Suit Larry	Vivendi	
Q4 '04			
TBC	Mortal Kombat: Deception	Midway	
TBC	Def Jam: Fight For New York	EA	
TBC	The Getaway: Black Monday	Sony	
TBC	Prince Of Persia 2	Ubisoft	Wanted
TBC	THUG 2: World Destruction Tour	Activision	Wanted
TBC	Gran Turismo 4	Sony	Wanted
TBC	Call Of Duty: Finest Hour	Activision	
TBC	Battlefield: Modern Combat	EA	
TBC	Jak 3	Sony	
TBC	SEGA Superstars	SEGA	
TBC	WWX: Rumble Roses	Konami	
TBC	Ratchet & Clank 3	Sony	
TBC	Sly 2: Band Of Thieves	Sony	



GAMECUBE

Month	Title	Publisher	
AUGUST '04			
TBC	Samurai Jack	SEGA	
SEPTEMBER '04			
03 September	Wario Ware Inc.: Mega Party Game$	Nintendo	Wanted
17 September	Madden NFL 2005	EA	
24 September	Animal Crossing	Nintendo	Wanted
24 September	Tiger Woods 2005	EA	
24 September	NHL 2005	EA	
TBC	Terminator 3: Redemption	Atari	
TBC	WWE: Day Of Reckoning	THQ	
TBC	Ribbit King	Atari	
OCTOBER '04			
09 October	Pikmin 2	Nintendo	Wanted
15 October	Donkey Konga	Nintendo	
22 October	Future Tactics	JoWood	
TBC	X-Men Legends	Activision	
TBC	FIFA 2005	EA	
TBC	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2	Konami	
Q4 '04			
TBC	Mortal Kombat: Deception	Midway	
TBC	Mario Party 6	Nintendo	
TBC	THUG 2: World Destruction Tour	Activision	Wanted
TBC	Paper Mario 2	Nintendo	Wanted
TBC	Def Jam: Fight For New York	EA	
TBC	Zelda: Four Swords Adventure	Nintendo	Wanted
TBC	Mario Tennis	Nintendo	Wanted
TBC	Tales Of Symphonia	Namco	
TBC	GoldenEye: Rogue Agent	EA	
TBC	Metroid Prime 2: Echoes	Nintendo	Wanted
TBC	Prince Of Persia 2	Ubisoft	Wanted



XBOX

Month	Title	Publisher	
AUGUST '04			
20 August	Rainbow Six 3: Black Arrow	Ubisoft	Wanted
27 August	Headhunter: Redemption	SEGA	
27 August	Sudeki	Microsoft	
27 August	The Chronicles Of Riddick: Escape From Butcher Bay	Vivendi	Wanted
SEPTEMBER '04			
03 September	Combat Elite: Paratroopers Of WWII	Acclaim	
10 September	Burnout 3: Takedown	EA	Wanted
17 September	Conflict: Vietnam	SCi	

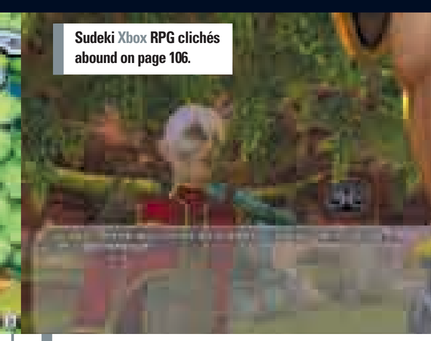
CALM YOUR FEVERISH ANTICIPATION WITH OUR COMPREHENSIVE LIST OF FORTHCOMING RELEASES



Front Mission 4 PS2 Assault page 108 for all the stats you can eat.

Resident Evil 4 Cube Insert 'master of unlocking' gag here.


Zelda: The Magical Hood GBA An epic adventure of miniature proportions.


Sudeki Xbox RPG clichés abound on page 106.

17 September	Madden NFL 2005	EA	
17 September	Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy	Midway	Wanted
24 September	Samurai Warriors	Koei	
24 September	Juiced	Acclaim	
24 September	Tiger Woods 2005	EA	
24 September	NHL 2005	EA	
TBC	FlatOut	Empire	
TBC	Shellshock: Nam '67	Eidos	
TBC	Silent Hill 4: The Room	Konami	
TBC	Second Sight	Codemasters	
TBC	Star Wars: Battlefront	Activision	Wanted
TBC	Star Wars: Republic Commando	Activision	
TBC	Kingdom Under Fire: The Crusaders	Phantagram	
TBC	Colin McRae Rally 2005	Codemasters	
OCTOBER '04			
22 October	Future Tactics	JoWood	
29 October	Rocky Legends	Ubisoft	
TBC	X-Men Legends	Activision	
TBC	Fable	Microsoft	Wanted
TBC	Fatal Frame 2: Crimson Butterfly	Ubisoft	
TBC	OutRun 2	SEGA	
TBC	Pro Evolution Soccer 4	Konami	Wanted
Q4 '04			
TBC	Halo 2	Microsoft	Wanted
TBC	Call Of Duty: Finest Hour	Activision	
TBC	Def Jam: Fight For New York	EA	
TBC	Doom 3	Activision	
TBC	Operation Flashpoint	Codemasters	
TBC	Mortal Kombat: Deception	Midway	
TBC	THUG 2: World Destruction Tour	Activision	Wanted
TBC	Forza Motorsport	Microsoft	
TBC	Battlefield: Modern Combat	EA	

PC

Month	Title	Publisher	
AUGUST '04			
13 August	Transport Giant	JoWood	
TBC	Doom 3	Activision	
SEPTEMBER '04			
10 September	Myst IV: Revelation	Ubisoft	
17 September	Madden NFL 2005	EA	
17 September	Conflict: Vietnam	SCi	
17 September	Creature Conflict: The Clan Wars	Cenega	
24 September	The Sims 2	EA	Wanted
24 September	Codename Panzers	Cenega	
24 September	Tiger Woods 2005	EA	
24 September	Pilot Down	Dreamcatcher	
24 September	NHL 2005	EA	
TBC	FlatOut	Empire	
TBC	Silent Hill 4: The Room	Konami	
TBC	EverQuest II	Ubisoft	
TBC	Star Wars: Republic Commando	Activision	
TBC	S.T.A.L.K.E.R.	THQ	Wanted
TBC	Star Wars: Battlefront	Activision	Wanted
OCTOBER '04			
01 October	TrackMania Sunrise	Digital Jesters	
22 October	Future Tactics	JoWood	
29 October	Cossacks 2	CDV	
TBC	Vampire: The Masquerade – Bloodlines	Activision	
TBC	FIFA 2005	EA	
TBC	Pro Evolution Soccer 4	Konami	Wanted
TBC	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2	Konami	
TBC	Tribes: Vengeance	Vivendi	
Q4 '04			
TBC	Evil Genius	Vivendi	
TBC	Football Manager 2005	SEGA	
TBC	Advent Rising	Majesco	
TBC	The Matrix Online	Warner Bros	Wanted
TBC	Brothers In Arms	Ubisoft	Wanted
TBC	Half-Life 2	Vivendi	Wanted



GAME BOY ADVANCE

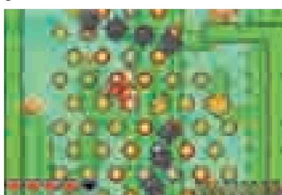
Month	Title	Publisher	
AUGUST '04			
13 August	Yu-Gi-Oh!: Reshef Of Destruction	Konami	
27 August	Dragon Ball Z: Supersonic Warriors	Atari	
SEPTEMBER '04			
03 September	Megaman Battle Network 4	Capcom	
03 September	Megaman Zero 3	Capcom	
17 September	Mario Golf: Advance Tour	Nintendo	
TBC	Boktai 2: Solar Boy Django	Konami	Wanted
OCTOBER '04			
01 October	Pokémon Leaf Green	Nintendo	Wanted
01 October	Pokémon Fire Red	Nintendo	Wanted
29 October	Hamtaro: Rainbow Rescue	Nintendo	
TBC	Metal Slug Advance	Ignition	Wanted
TBC	FIFA 2005	EA	
TBC	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2	Konami	
Q4 '04			
TBC	Mario Pinball	Nintendo	Wanted
TBC	Zelda: The Magical Hood	Nintendo	Wanted
TBC	Kingdom Hearts: Chain Of Memories	Buena Vista	Wanted
TBC	Mario Vs Donkey Kong	Nintendo	
TBC	Mario Party Advance	Nintendo	
TBC	Banjo Pilot	THQ	

PLEASE NOTE: While every effort has been made to ensure these dates are correct at the time of going to press, they are liable to change at short notice. Which is completely beyond our control, so don't get all up in our faces, girlfriend.

games™ ON THE HORIZON

DONKEY KONG: KING OF SWING

Format: Game Boy Advance
Publisher: Nintendo
An odd concept, this shoulder-button-controlled swingathon was one of the unsung heroes of Nintendo's post-E3 event – a mix of platform and puzzle elements combine to form a unique game that we can't wait to get stuck into. Then get stuck on level three…



MIDWAY

Format: PC, PlayStation2, Xbox
Publisher: SCi
War games may be ten a penny these days but if a developer is going to try something a little different, we have to applaud it. *Midway* drops players into some impressive naval and aerial battles; with support for up to 16 players online this could well be one to watch out for next year.



BLINX 2: MASTERS OF SPACE AND TIME

Format: Xbox
Publisher: Microsoft
The world's favourite time cat may not have had the most enthralling adventure in his Xbox debut but this 5D sequel is already showing signs that it may be pretty good. Some nice ideas for Live play should be enough to drag at least a few players away from *Rainbow Six* and *Project Gotham*…





THE PEOPLE IN THE GAMES INDUSTRY TELL IT LIKE IT IS…

THE DYING BREATH OF A GENRE?



It started with *Street Fighter II*. I remember walking around London and the city was packed with *SFII* cabinets. From minicab offices to chip shops, even in the Chinese community centre in Soho – everywhere. And the arcades! Oh, the arcades. A meeting place for beginners, somewhere to hang out and swap combo tips, insult each other's character choices, and generally whisper about a hidden mini-cab office that had seven (count 'em) *SFII* cabs in its waiting area. That was where London's elite played, and crossover-kick-knee-jab-dragon combos were the norm.

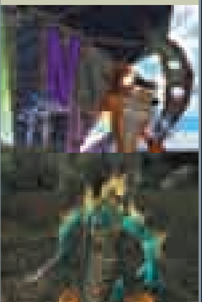
Soon, though, most players reached that level. Game designers catered for their audience and created new ways for skilled players to assert themselves. Tech-rolls, guard-breaks and different ways to move around added greater depth and gave the serious fighters something to train towards. Sadly, by catering for those who took their game seriously, developers were taking the first steps towards alienating the rest of the gaming community. With each level of complexity came the loss of more players – some unwilling, some simply incapable of the level of dexterity required to compete. As the number of players dwindled, so too did the number of fighting games, until we come to today's sad situation.

As a die-hard fighting-game fan, I'm saddened by the fact that today, in one of the largest cities in the world, I am only able to find one machine running the greatest beat-'em-up ever made – *Virtua Fighter 4*. Where now for my breed? Move to Tokyo, where a recent scheme for storing player data on a card has given *VF4* a new lease of life? Or, more likely, sit and wait, and hope that the introduction of a similar scheme here injects new life into a dying genre. But I won't hold my breath.

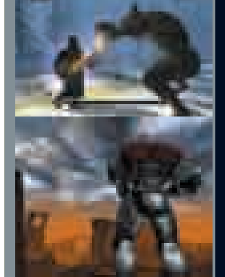
LEO TAN, PR EXECUTIVE, BARRINGTON HARVEY (AND HARDENED BEAT-'EM-UP NINJA)

FROM THE FRONT

HUGE STAFF CUTS AT VU GAMES WHILE THE WHOLE INDUSTRY FEELS THE EFFECTS OF PIRACY



Blizzard has been unaffected by the changes and continues work on *World Of WarCraft*.



A few of Vivendi's studios, like Sierra, have now ceased to exist.

VIVENDI UNIVERSAL GAMES UNVEILS NEW PLANS AFTER HUGE STAFF CUTS



DIVIDE AND CONQUER

It's all change for acclaimed publisher Vivendi Universal Games, as a third of the company's 900 employees have been laid off as part of its re-structuring plans. These plans include splitting the company into three separate regional business units, each of which will have its own president – none of whom will be current international president Christophe Ramboz, who's announced that he'll be leaving the company to "pursue other opportunities" when the transition to the new global structure is complete.

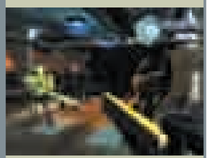
The new divisions will be North America, Asia-Pacific and Europe, all of which will report to the man who's been involved with the operation since taking on the chief executive role at the start on the year, Bruce Hack.

The 350 jobs that were lost as part of these re-structuring efforts seem to have come mainly from the company's Sierra operation, and recent reports suggest that almost every member of staff at the former Sierra offices in Bellevue, Washington, has been made redundant. The office itself is set

"RECENT REPORTS SUGGEST THAT ALMOST EVERY MEMBER OF STAFF AT THE FORMER SIERRA OFFICES IN WASHINGTON HAS BEEN MADE REDUNDANT IN THE RESHUFFLE"

SUCCESS PUSHES KUJU UP THE PROPERTY LADDER

MOVING ON UP



Games like *Fire Warrior* have added to Kuju's success.

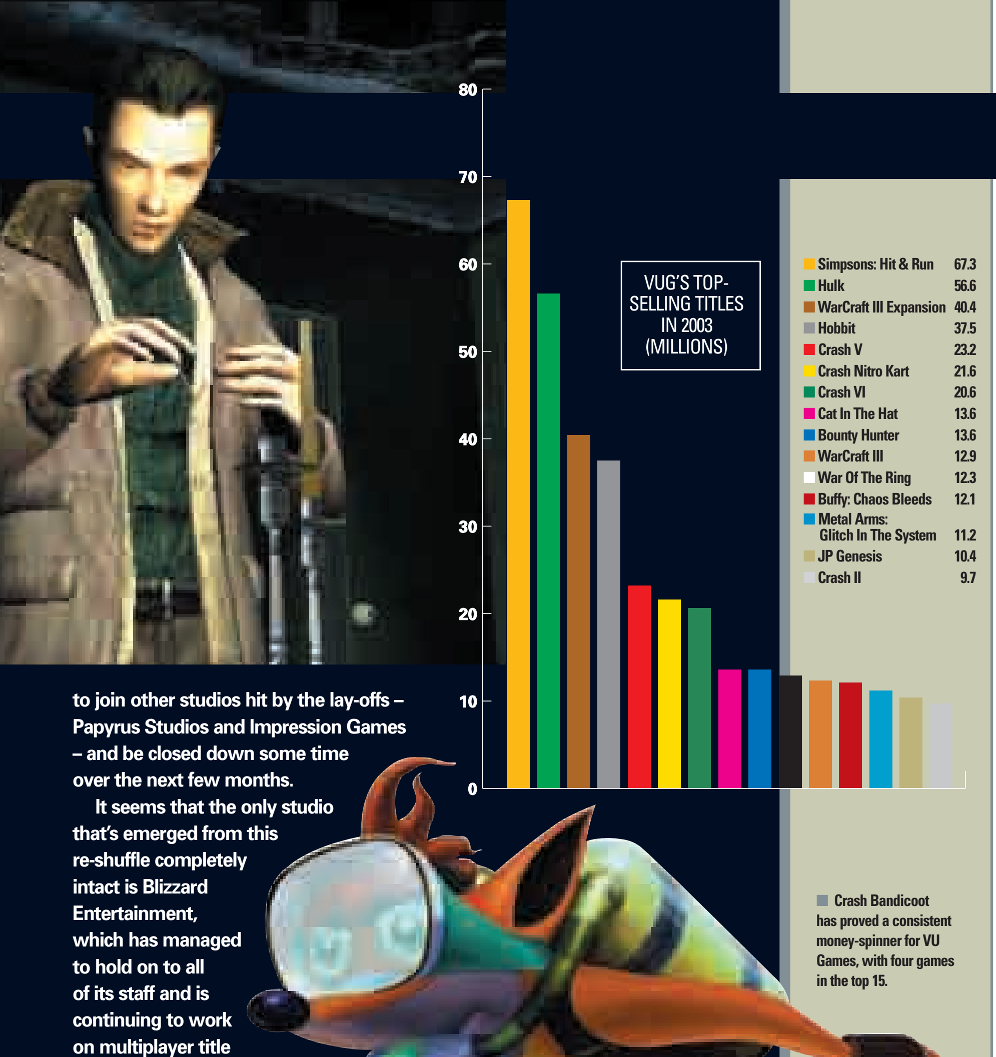


Licensed titles have also proved popular.

A sure sign of a company's success is when it expands to such a point that it outgrows its office and has to move elsewhere. This is exactly the situation in which independent developer Kuju has found itself, and it has announced that it's moving two of its four studios into more spacious buildings to accommodate the company's growth.

The recently founded Brighton studio is set to move closer to the town centre, where studio head, Ed Daly, is slapping on the sun cream. "Being able to live and work in Brighton, which is such an exciting and lively place, is fantastic," said Daly. "There's already an existing pool of talent here but we have no doubt that this coastal location will be a great attraction to many people in the industry."

Kuju has been going from strength to strength in the last few months and has signed a large number of high-profile development deals, as well as having several unannounced projects in the pipeline. These deals have obviously prompted the move and we can expect some great things from Kuju in the near future.



to join other studios hit by the lay-offs – Papyrus Studios and Impression Games – and be closed down some time over the next few months.

It seems that the only studio that's emerged from this re-shuffle completely intact is Blizzard Entertainment, which has managed to hold on to all of its staff and is continuing to work on multiplayer title *World Of WarCraft*. Although *World Of WarCraft* may be safe, however, it remains to be seen whether other upcoming titles will be affected by this overhaul.

Crash Bandicoot has proved a consistent money-spinner for VU Games, with four games in the top 15.

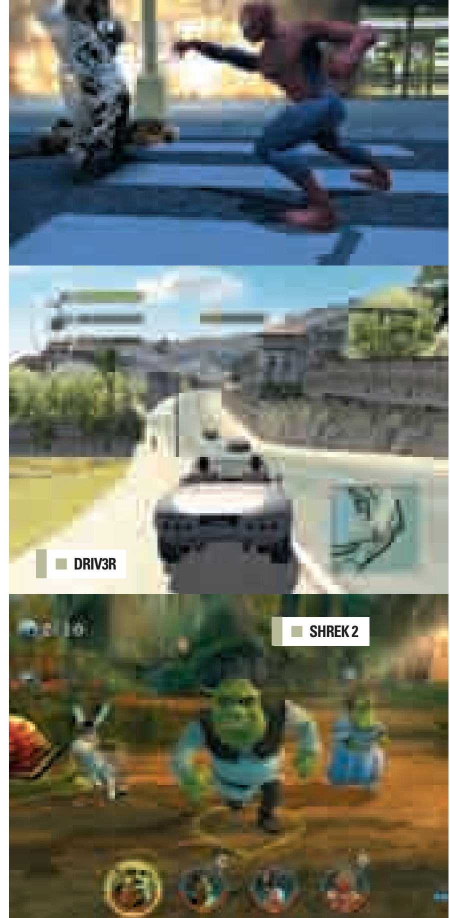
UK MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

	Title	Publisher	Format
1	Spider-Man 2	Activision	Multi
2	Driv3r	Atari	Multi
3	Shrek 2	Activision	Multi
4	Athens 2004	SCEE	PS2
5	UEFA Euro 2004 Portugal	EA Sports	Multi
6	Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow	Ubisoft	Multi
7	Harry Potter: The Prisoner Of Azkaban	EA Games	Multi
8	McAfee Internet Security v6.0	McAfee	PC
9	Full Spectrum Warrior	THQ	Xbox
10	Need For Speed: Underground	EA Games	Multi

Despite *Driv3r*'s previous unwarranted dominance (we've given up trying to discover why), Activision has set new company records with *Spider-Man 2* thanks to a 76 per cent sales increase in its second week. Not bad for a man in a leotard.

All information is compiled by ChartTrack and is the strict copyright of ELSPA (UK) Ltd. UK Full Price Sales Charts (All Formats) (w/e 10 July 2004)





PIRACY PROBLEMS

BOOTLEG SOFTWARE CAUSES INDUSTRY LOSSES

Software piracy is continuing to cause major problems in the industry. According to a new study, it's currently responsible for a loss of nearly $29 billion worldwide. This shocking figure has been revealed by a study conducted by the Business Software Alliance (BSA) and research firm International Data Corporation (IDC).

The recent findings show that while $80 billion in software was installed on computers last year, only $51 billion of it was actually legally purchased. That means that a huge 36 per cent of software installed in 2003 was pirated.

"Software piracy continues to be a major challenge for economies worldwide," said Robert Holleyman, president and CEO of the BSA. "From Algeria to New Zealand, Canada to China, piracy deprives local governments of tax revenue, costs jobs throughout the technology supply chain and cripples the local, in-country software industry."

The main problem lies within countries where people are suddenly integrating computers into their lives. For example, 91 per cent of software in the Ukraine was pirated compared to only 30 per cent in the UK. Despite the obvious fact that the piracy problem is spiralling out of control, there's still no sight of a solution…

The temptation to buy cut-price bootlegs is strong.

Pirated games? Well, the suitcases are a giveaway…



“You’re a big man, but you’re out of shape” **Super Metroid SNES [Nintendo] 1994**



BC

IT'S PREHISTORIC LIFE, JIM, BUT NOT AS WE KNOW IT

There was an age when the phrase 'survival of the fittest' actually meant something; an age when going outside in the morning meant the difference between finding your lunch and becoming lunch for something tall, scaly and full of razor-sharp teeth. Such is the world that Intrepid Computer Entertainment (with a little help from Lionhead Studios) is attempting to create with its first title, *BC* – a sprawling, epic game that attempts to draw gamers into the world of prehistoric man. What hasn't been made entirely clear is exactly what kind of genre the game falls into. Is it a god sim like *Populous*? A real-time strategy title? Something more live-action, like *Black & White*? Surprisingly, it's all three and more besides.

"The player is responsible for the welfare of a small tribe of men established at the beginning of the game," explains Lionhead producer Scott Sanders. "It's up to the player to provide the tribe with food, water and the technology and skills to ensure that the tribe not only survives, but continues to prosper and grow. The great thing about *BC* is that you can play it the way you want to. A lot of people will want to really take care of their tribe and increase the tribe's population, for instance, whereas I like to run around braining dinosaurs like a maniac. Playing *BC* will probably tell you a lot about what kind of person you are."

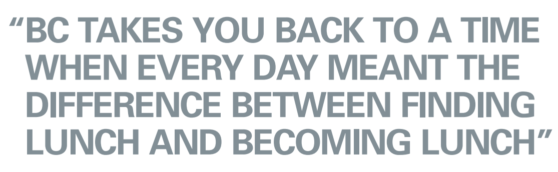
Indeed, the fact that the game gives you the freedom to do almost whatever you please is perhaps its biggest asset. Certainly, there's a huge element of the god simulation about it, in that you have to maintain your tribe by assigning tasks (such as hunting, gathering and defending the camp) to your people. By keeping them active, they gain experience, although those on mundane duties such as resource gathering advance slower than those fighting enemies; experience causes the tribe to evolve and gain better abilities.

However, built upon this godlike foundation is the need to have members of your tribe complete quests that will advance them even further. These quests can encompass all manner of tasks (such as finding specific items, killing a particularly nasty dinosaur or rescuing survivors from other tribes), but require some tactical thought. Say that you need to recover an item on an island that lies just beyond a nest of raptors, surrounded by crocodile-infested waters. Do you send a group of people and risk lives, or assign a single tribesman and possibly make things harder if he runs into trouble? Do you pick people with athletic skills, making them more suited for crossing the dangerous waters, or warriors who wouldn't be so much at risk if they came under attack? These decisions can be the difference between life and death for your tribe and, as such, each one needs to be treated as seriously as the last.

Ultimately, though, the overall objective is to lead the tribe to the promised land high in the mountains – a goal you can actually see when the game begins. Getting there requires a great deal of work on your part, not least because things become increasingly difficult as you progress across the huge continent that

LONG TIME COMING

The fact that *BC* has been in the pipeline for so long isn't surprising – drawn-out development is a trademark for any Lionhead game. Of course, it's all a matter of scale, and *BC* isn't exactly small. "It's an incredibly ambitious project, and developing something as epic as this has proved extremely challenging," admits producer Scott Sanders. "We wanted to make a game where man was pitted against beast in a fully simulated primitive world – once we knew that, it helped us work out what tools and systems we'd need to develop. Unfortunately, there isn't scope for an 'it'll be done when it's done' attitude, but Microsoft has been incredibly supportive."


"BC TAKES YOU BACK TO A TIME WHEN EVERY DAY MEANT THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FINDING LUNCH AND BECOMING LUNCH"

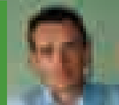
DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: Microsoft
DEVELOPER: Intrepid Computer Entertainment
RELEASE: Q1 '05
GENRE: Simulation Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

A prehistoric adventure on an epic god-sim scale – nurture your tribe and explore the land, but watch out for the local wildlife…


As you bond with your tribe, you can adorn them with tattoos, masks and jewellery for a distinctive look.


Life carries on regardless of what you do – creatures attack each other, weather changes and plants flourish.



PRODUCER PROFILE

■ Scott Sanders is a producer at Lionhead Studios. He has been involved in the games industry for over nine years (starting out as a tester, then moving through design onto production) and has worked on a large number of handheld titles, several console ports and a few original games.

HISTORY

■ **LEGO RACERS** 2000 [Game Boy Color]
■ **BIG BASS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP** 2000 [PSone]
■ **FIFA ROAD TO WORLD CUP 98** 1997 [Saturn]

■ As your tribe evolves, you'll be able to improve their skills and enhance the weaponry they use.

"BC IS AN INCREDIBLY AMBITIOUS PROJECT, AND DEVELOPING SOMETHING AS EPIC AS THIS HAS PROVED EXTREMELY CHALLENGING"
SCOTT SANDERS, PRODUCER, LIONHEAD

■ Taking down something as tough as a T-Rex might mean the loss of a few tribespeople.

■ The Simians – a thorn in the side of the *BC* player. Always be ready in case they attack…

BC [CONT]



"IF HUMANITY IS TO SURVIVE, THE TRIBE NEED TO RISE UP TO BECOME THE PIONEERS IN A PRIMEVAL, UNPREDICTABLE WORLD"

MICROSOFT PRESS RELEASE

■ An athletic sort like this might be handy for carrying out objectives, but can you risk losing him?

■ Intrepid has worked had to ensure that the environments are as believable and realistic as possible.



DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ Founded in 1999 by former Bullfrog employees Joe Rider and Matt Chilton, Intrepid Computer Entertainment is a small development team based in south-west London. Currently working exclusively on *BC*, it was the second satellite developer (after Big Blue Box, the team behind *Fable*) to be accepted by Peter Molyneux's Lionhead Studios.

HISTORY

■ BC is the first game to be developed by Intrepid Computer Entertainment



■ Don't fancy yours much… Your tribespeople will develop differing skills and physiques.

■ The herbivores aren't as much of a threat, but that doesn't mean they'll go down without a fight…

houses *BC*'s world. Split into five distinct environments (from tropical jungle and desert to icy mountains and even a volcano), players must adapt to each if they are to have any hope of their tribe making it through in one piece. "Obviously, hunting and gathering is made more difficult by the increasingly inhospitable terrain and the player may have to re-think their tactics in order to keep the tribe fed," says Sanders. "Additionally, each eco-system has different components and creatures, so the resultant simulation modelling will present the player with a great variety of hunting opportunities ranging from a 'turkey shoot' to near-suicidal desperate confrontation."

While the changes in environment allow the game to present gamers with unique challenges and situations, the sandbox-style gameplay means that players aren't necessarily locked into a situation once they progress. It's entirely possible for the tribe to return to previously explored regions should the going get too tough further on, via the river that flows throughout the land. Although making the decision to backtrack isn't one to be taken lightly, it does open up all kinds of opportunities when it comes to completing unfinished side-quests, collecting missed items or even removing entire species from a region – and it's the creatures that enhance the feeling that the world within *BC* is a thriving environment, as opposed to a barren landscape.

A huge amount of work has gone into the creation of all the animals, from behavioural pattern research to building, weighting and texturing all the models. Many of the creatures also went through multiple iterations when it came to their skin texturing, and the amount of animations required for each creation is truly staggering. "*BC* isn't like an FPS where you round a corner and the NPCs move around, shoot at you and then die," insists Sanders. "Every single creature in the game has to look as if it lives in the game world. This means that every creature had to eat, sleep, drink, run, walk, and have many different styles of attack and death animations. Making the creatures appear as living, breathing entities has been a huge challenge."

Interaction with the multitude of creatures is paramount to *BC*'s gameplay – almost everything that your tribe needs, from food and clothing to completing many of the mission goals and generally surviving, involves dealing with a living creature. However, there's more to do than just club anything that moves, and the more cunning player will look for more inventive ways to exploit a creature's behaviour. Some animals, for instance, can be captured and then maintained through constant feeding. While domestication is never an issue because of their feral nature, learning the creature's behaviour patterns can prove useful – particularly if you then set them against your enemies.

With Intrepid insisting that there's more depth beneath the surface of *BC* than most gamers will be able to imagine, creating the game has necessitated numerous sacrifices – even something intended to be as epic as this has to draw the line somewhere. "There are many ideas that have been put on hiatus," admits Sanders. "It's been tough, because the game lends itself to so many fantastic ideas, but we've had to be ruthless. It doesn't really frustrate me, though – I'd rather we spent the time honing what we've got as opposed to trying to shoehorn in even more features."

With the deadline of early 2005 looming, it's good to see that work is underway to ensure the game doesn't slip. Still, Intrepid has already confirmed a sequel – complete with Xbox Live-enabled multiplayer action – so we suspect that anything that doesn't make into *BC* will show up somewhere down the line.

"BC'S ABUNDANT FLEXIBILITY IN ITS GAMEPLAY ALLOWS PLAYERS TO DEVELOP THEIR TRIBE IN MANY DIFFERENT WAYS"

MONKEY MAGIC

Although there are many dangers from which the player must protect their tribe in the land of *BC*, the most persistent threat (besides carnivorous dinosaurs, naturally) are the Simians. Essentially a step down the evolutionary ladder compared to your own tribe, they're a brutal and instinctively aggressive race that can do all kinds of damage if left to run rampant; you'll need to watch for attacks that could leave your camp in tatters. "When the Simians appear," warns Scott Sanders, "they'll take the action and tension in the game to the next level. The Simians won't evolve as such, but if they see you brandishing a melee weapon, they will decide to follow suit."

SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY

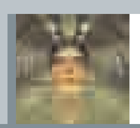


"WITH THE COMBINATION OF UBISOFT'S TECHNOLOGICAL PROWESS AND VISIONARY CREATIVITY, IT WILL BE THE BEST-LOOKING GAME ON ANY PLATFORM"

FLORENCE ALIBERT, MARKETING DIRECTOR, UBISOFT

■ Taking enemies out from close range is now a vital part of Sam's killer repertoire.

■ These paper walls are no match for Sam's knife – and the guard isn't that tough either.



MUSICIAN PROFILE

Amon Tobin is a proven star on the musical innovation scene. Born in Brazil, his first project (under the name Cujo) brought him to the attention of the Ninja Tune label, which helped bring him international success with albums such as Bricolage and Permutation. He also composed Chaos Theory's soundtrack.

HISTORY

- **PERMUTATION** 1998
- **PIRAHNA BREAKS** 1997
- **BRICOLAGE** 1997

"THE MORE EXPERIENCE YOU HAVE, THE CLOSER YOU GET"

To suggest that Ubisoft is trying to train its own private army of mercenaries might be taking things a bit far, but we can't help noticing that with each step forward the publisher's *Splinter Cell* series takes, the player comes that little bit closer to learning the art of the professional killer. For instance, almost anyone can use a gun effectively – you pull the trigger and the job's done. On the other hand, it takes a pro to breathe down a target's neck without getting caught, the thrill of being able to whisper sweet nothings in their ear before snuffing out their candle. Interestingly, that's the point that Ubisoft Montreal is keen to emphasise with *Chaos Theory*; the first two games may have taught players the art of stealth, but it's the third that'll show them what it's like to be the ultimate silent assassin.

However, we're sure we're not alone if we say we're a little cynical about what appears to be a rush release for the most recent entry in the *Splinter Cell* canon. The fact that there are only eight months between the planned release of *Chaos Theory* and the appearance of the last game, *Pandora Tomorrow*, suggests this latest effort is merely a hurried cash-in. According to the development team, though, work has been progressing on the project for longer than people might expect. "We started the development of *Chaos Theory* soon after the original *Splinter Cell* in the Montreal studio, which has allowed both us and the Shanghai studio to focus on including as many new features as possible," reveals Mathieu Ferland, producer at Ubisoft Montreal. "*Chaos Theory* has had a regular development time of nearly two years and the game features many innovations. Hopefully, what we've got planned should mean that there's a lot of fun ahead, for both fans of the series and newcomers alike."

Promises of new concepts are all very well but it's only once you get a taste of what *Chaos Theory* is doing that you begin to realise exactly how many more there are. In fact, the combination of subtle enhancements and all-new elements is almost enough to convince you that it was *Pandora Tomorrow* that was the upgrade and *Chaos Theory* is the next advancement of the series, rather than the other way round. Graphically, for instance, Ubisoft has gone to town with the Xbox's effects, with everything from per-pixel specular lighting for reflections to procedural texturing being used to improve on what has already been a high-point for the series. Certainly, it's not easy to spot the differences immediately but seeing the game in motion ably shows off the new lighting and texturing effects. Sure, Ubisoft's boast that *Chaos Theory* is 'the best-looking game on any platform, period' seems cocky, but it's certainly not far off the mark.

Graphicas aside though, *Chaos Theory* is going to need more than a coat of polish before it proves itself a 'must-buy' less than a year after *Pandora Tomorrow's* release. But then, that's where pushing the idea of the professional killer one step forward comes into play – the very hook upon which Ubisoft is hoping to hang *Chaos Theory*'s corpse-full of gameplay improvements, if you will. And no, it's not just the fact that Sam's now got a knife – that's the sharpened tip of the iceberg as far as examples go. "*Chaos Theory* focuses

DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox, PC
ORIGIN: Canada
PUBLISHER: Ubisoft
DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Montreal
RELEASE: Nov '04
GENRE: Stealth Adventure
PLAYERS: 1-2 (1-4 Online)

The *Splinter Cell* series refines itself yet again, tweaking and improving the best bits while learning a few new tricks along the way.

SPIES LIKE US

Although the addition of an online mode was very welcome in *Pandora Tomorrow*, it led to all sorts of arguments – the combative nature of the gameplay, despite it being co-operative, meant someone was always going to lose. To counteract this, *Chaos Theory* has a purely co-operative mode that sees two players going up against AI-controlled enemies in missions that stand apart from the main game. Gamers have to help each other to succeed, using specific co-op moves (such as the leg-up to reach high places) and watching each other's back. The fact that this can be played split-screen as well as via Xbox Live will make things easier.

"CHAOS THEORY MIGHT SEEM LIKE A RUSH-JOB IN TERMS OF RELEASE TIMING, BUT THAT REALLY ISN'T THE CASE"



Enemy behind the door? No problem – just kick it down and gain the upper hand…

SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY CONT.

very much upon proximity," says Ferland. "A lot of the game's situations will see the player needing to get incredibly close to the enemy, which they're then rewarded for. The addition of the knife for Sam is very useful because at close range the player can still make important decisions: the decision of knocking out or the decision to kill. You don't get that with a gun. This freedom has consequences on the pace of the game and on the mission objectives, but it's an important aspect. We just felt that sniping isn't cool any more – anyone can do that, but only the best agents can get close enough without detection and use such a primitive tool as a knife."

Not only is getting into the thick of the action far more important than before, but players also have to think further 'out of the box' when it comes to completing each mission, as the safest answer to each problem might not always be the most obvious. Ubisoft has worked hard to come up with inventive ways of getting the job done, usually involving taking advantage of the environment, and has created a far more believable world and lead character in the process.

It's this attempt to address issues of linearity and the ability to do the unexpected that stands out as one of *Chaos Theory*'s more important improvements – and not just because it gives players the liberty to deal with situations as they see fit. However, much of the game's freedom comes down to your own style of play – are you the gung-ho killer or the covert operative who'd rather get in and out without a single casualty? Take the problem of a guarded tent containing vital information, for instance; although taking out the two guards is possible (not to mention risky), the more daring may try to slice through the canvas and get inside without anyone even knowing they're there.

Even better than allowing players to choose what they do is giving the option of when they do it, and in this respect Ubisoft appears to be covering all the bases. "It's a smart way to solve issues we had with previous games," says Ferland, "such as certain scripted events that didn't work in the original *Splinter Cell* unless you did them in the right order. It also removes situations where a player fails a mission because he missed a non-critical objective. Why would missing a minor objective lead to World War 3? Why would you get 'game over' for this? A non-linear structure is forgiving the player for such failures as the game boundaries are much wider. Finally, we thought that being able to make decisions about which objective to accomplish first, or which way to go first, are just great things for a gamer; it brings more freedom, more replay value and more fun."

Even though memories of *Pandora Tomorrow* are still clear in our minds, it's hard to not to be impressed with the small but important steps that *Chaos Theory* is taking. Once again, Ubisoft is trying to add even more spice to a genre that it has already managed to snatch away from the likes of *Metal Gear Solid* and *Tenchu*. So long as gamers don't react cynically to the release of two games in the same series in the space of a year, *Chaos Theory* is likely to be the next big thing in stealth entertainment this Christmas.

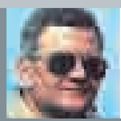
"PROXIMITY IS THE KEY – IF YOU LACK THE ABILITY TO GET UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL, YOU'RE GOING TO FAIL IN CHAOS THEORY"

ALL THE RIGHT MOVES

Guns are all very well, but Sam Fisher's knife is *the* must-have accessory for this year's spy. It offers a wealth of options when it comes to getting around levels and killing the opposition, which is always a good thing. But then that's not to say that Sam needs something sharp and pointy to be deadly up-close – he's got plenty of moves to keep enemies at bay. *Chaos Theory* adds even more to his arsenal, with some smooth manoeuvres available to those who like to show off. Ever fancied hanging from the ceiling by your feet and snapping the neck of anyone who wanders by below you? Now's your chance…



Getting close is important, but there are times when only guns will do… even if they do make a lot of noise.



AUTHOR PROFILE

Originally an insurance broker with a passion for naval history, Tom Clancy is now one of the most renowned military writers of the present day. His novels have spawned numerous TV movies and shows, not to mention videogame franchises such as Ghost Recon, Rainbow Six and, of course, Splinter Cell.

HISTORY

- **THE SUM OF ALL FEARS** 1991
- **PATRIOT GAMES** 1987
- **THE HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER** 1984

Thanks to the improved AI, guards are more unpredictable than they ever were before.

The lighting effects have been made even better, if that's all possible. It's so real, it's scary.

"SNIPING ISN'T COOL ANY MORE – ONLY THE BEST AGENTS CAN GET CLOSE ENOUGH WITHOUT DETECTION AND USE SUCH A PRIMITIVE TOOL AS A KNIFE"
MATHIEU FERLAND, PRODUCER, UBISOFT MONTREAL

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

SOFTLY, SOFTLY, CATCHY MONKEY

SPLINTER CELL + CLOSE COMBAT + CO-OPERATION = CHAOS THEORY

There's a real thrill in being able to sneak up on enemies without being spotted.

KINGDOM UNDER FIRE: THE CRUSADERS



The motion-blur effects that accompany the quicker attacks are absolutely beautiful in motion.

"AN INDIVIDUAL HERO IS POWERFUL ENOUGH TO TURN THE TIDE OF BATTLE, BUT NOT ENOUGH TO WIN THE WAR SINGLE-HANDEDLY"
KINGDOM UNDER FIRE WEBSITE

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

KEY TO THE KINGDOM

DYNASTY WARRIORS + MORE FIGHTING x STRATEGY = KINGDOM UNDER FIRE: TC

Fancy moves can be added or upgraded in the RPG bits between battles.

Orcs *really* don't like being cut up with big swords.

KINGDOM UNDER FIRE: THE CRUSADERS
XBOX



DEVELOPER PROFILE
Founded some ten years ago, Phantagram was the first Korean developer to export its titles and has since enjoyed reasonable success with games like *Kingdom Under Fire* in PAL territories. Ambitious and building a decent name for itself, this could very well be a company to watch over the next few years.

HISTORY
- **KINGDOM UNDER FIRE** 1999 [PC]
- **FORGOTTEN SAGA** 1997 [PC]
- **XYCLUNT** 1996 [PC]



Take out a hardened unit leader and the entire regiment will be disbanded.

The game engine can handle over a hundred characters on screen at any time. Which is nice.

DETAILS
FORMAT: Xbox
ORIGIN: Korea
PUBLISHER: Microsoft
DEVELOPER: Phantagram
RELEASE: Oct '04
GENRE: Real Time
PLAYERS: 1 (1-4 on Xbox Live)

Combining fast-paced and epic combat with RPG and strategy elements, *Kingdom Under Fire* provides an interesting blend of genres through four separate campaigns.

STRADDLING GENRES LIKE ONLY A FANTASY WAR GAME CAN…

Oh, how nice it can be to be wrong sometimes. When a game slips off the radar, it's usually safe to assume that something horrible has happened. So when things went all quiet on the Phantagram front nearly two years ago, we assumed that the console sequel to *Kingdom Under Fire* (then in its infancy) wouldn't make it as far as UK Xboxes. Skip forward 18 months and we're paid a visit by the Korean developer, clearly quite proud that its once-ugly duckling is growing into quite the swan. A 20-foot-tall swan with a huge sword and an unhealthy appetite for death and destruction…

While the game's trailer might suggest little more than a Koei-influenced hack-and-slash adventure, it doesn't take a great deal of investigation to reveal otherwise. The structure is simple yet much more involving than most strategy titles – ordering units about a map as you would in a real-time strategy game gives way to hectic and action-heavy combat when your troops get their hands dirty. When missions are over, the RPG elements kick in and you can upgrade units with new moves and abilities, augment existing ones or even recruit mercenaries to your cause.

So accustomed are we to seeing multiple characters battle their way through the same old levels that *Kingdom Under Fire*'s wonderfully varied campaigns are a pleasant surprise. Available from the off are Gerald, a human warrior whose troops resemble medieval warriors, and Lucretia, a mistress of evil who commands a plethora of evil beasties from Dark Elves to Ogres and everything in between. Rather than just having different units, the two play surprisingly differently, so while the mighty Gerald is a sturdy brawler the evil female alternative follows the classic stereotype of being quicker but less powerful (and is slightly more enjoyable to use). As well as a force of weaker underlings, each character brings with them a couple of generals who can unleash hell at the touch of a button. That's what friends are for, right?

But probably the most exciting element planned for the game is the Live support, allowing up to four players to compete from far corners of the world. Games are limited to three units apiece in these network battles but that still allows ample opportunity for strategic planning as well as a healthy dose of button-pounding action. Like *Splinter Cell*, there should be minimal danger of connection issues due to the smaller number of players, so we're looking forward to seeing just how well online play is implemented. There will also be downloadable missions as well as a ranking system to separate the Goblins from the Ogres.

There are so many elements that show Phantagram's attention to detail in creating *Kingdom Under Fire* that the overall package is rapidly becoming one that really showcases the developer's passion and ability. This is a massively ambitious project – the more genres you attempt to splice, the more room for error there's going to be – but one that shows promise at this stage. It's certainly a unique title, especially within its new-found console environment, and provided it hits its proposed Q3 release, it should be able to develop quite a cult following before the big boys get on Live (*Halo 2*, *Doom 3* and *OutRun 2* to name but a few).

Still, the thinking man is barely catered for on Live so we hope we're not wrong in predicting good things for *Kingdom Under Fire*.

"STRATEGY GAMEPLAY GIVES WAY TO HECTIC AND ACTION-HEAVY COMBAT WHEN YOUR TROOPS GET THEIR HANDS DIRTY"

FOG OF WAR
The battlefields of *Kingdom Under Fire* are decidedly mist-shrouded but this is hardly surprising – like much of the strategy genre, maps remain covered in fog until you move a unit into an area or trigger an event. Even then, though, the horizon is often somewhat murky, something we'll put down to the obscene amount of detailed characters the game is able to render at any given time. This can sometimes make parts of the game feel a little dated, but when you've got an entire war going on on-screen you'll have little time to look beyond the endless waves of bloodthirsty enemies. Unless you want to be stabbed, that is.

JUICED

GENTLEMEN, RESTART YOUR ENGINES…

PS2 **The racing genre never has been, and probably never will be, short of offerings.** As with any crowded market, in order to succeed and avoid the looming mediocrity that comes so easily, this day and age demands that you need to do at least one thing extremely well. Be it jaw-dropping speed, realism, huge amounts of destruction or even a devilishly clever and effective promotional campaign, something needs to be borderline perfection if you're to have a prayer.

So what exactly is *Juiced* packing? A quick scan down the press release soon reveals the angle that's been taken. It's impossible to ignore the figure '7.2 trillion', it leaps off the page; a fairly large number by any standards, we think you'll find, and it relates directly to the game's vehicle customisation options.

Taking a rather large leaf out of the book entitled *NFS: Underground*, *Juiced* will make almost every aspect of your chosen automobile customisable, only on a much grander scale than EA's street-racer. From the obvious vinyl and paint enhancements through to selecting the colour of your speedo and what stereo you use to pump out the driving tunes, you'll have complete control over what you're steering around the streets. Although the claimed 7.2 trillion combinations is pretty much impossible to prove (or disprove), from what we've seen so far, it may well be a fairly accurate claim.

Although there's obvious appeal in burning around a city with no concern for you or anyone else, Juice Games has opted for the misty middle ground between simulation and arcade racing for this title, and it seems to have worked reasonably well. Over 50 licensed cars will be making an appearance, which should be more than enough for the car fanatics out there, and although it's extremely tempting to doll up your machine and then hit the road displaying the absolute definition of road rage, the simulation properties of the game will soon have you grudgingly peeling your destroyed motorised masterpiece from an annoyingly unscathed lamp post.

A few too many prangs like this – and after the garage has relieved you of a couple of hundred thousand notes – and you'll soon have learnt your lesson and realised that half the appeal of the game is in the realism; you can effectively ruin your racing career with a bit of careless driving.

A gambling aspect to the game will also be present; the most extreme example of this is in the pink-slip racing. Betting your wheels against another driver in the hope of getting his machine out of it is an extremely chancy business and can make or break you when against the computer. Of course, the real excitement will be in the likely event that this feature makes it online. Blowing all your cash on tit-bits and putting in the time to make your car your own, only to lose it to one of your mates (or worse still, a complete stranger) is going to be a painful process and will make for some very competitive racing.

Whereas there's no doubt that *Juiced* could quite easily hold its own, or indeed be extremely successful in a time of no major competition, it's doubtful that things will play out that way. With the threat of the near-perfect-looking and extremely well-marketed *Burnout 3* being released at around the same time, as well as a customisation-challenging new addition to the *Need For Speed* series on the horizon, we have our doubts as to whether *Juiced* is going to get any credit for the work that has obviously been put in. Still, time will tell.

DETAILS

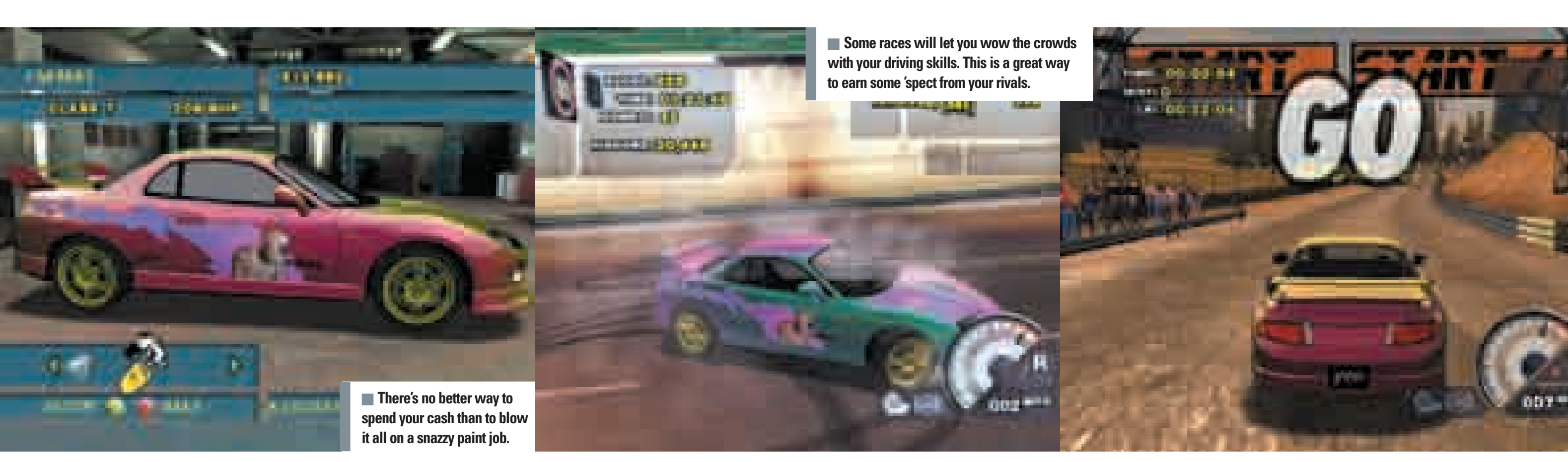
FORMAT: PS2, Xbox, PC
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: Acclaim
DEVELOPER: Juice Games
RELEASE: Sept '04
GENRE: Racing
PLAYERS: 1-2

Race street scum in your chosen car, win cash and then spend copious amounts of it improving your vehicle's looks and performance.

ARE YOU A BETTING MAN?

Winning a multitude of races against hardened street racers won't be the only way to accumulate vehicle-enhancing cash in the *Juiced* racing world. By merely showing your (hopefully) well-respected face at a gang's meeting, you can bet on any races taking place. On top of this, when actually competing you'll have the option of taking out a more personal bet against any one rival that you think should be easy prey for a racer of your calibre. While some competitors will simply not be interested in competing with you, others will be prepared to front substantial sums and you could easily win big or be bled dry by these racing sharks. This should make for some very interesting play and introduce a tactical spending element to an otherwise standard formula. Whether this risky betting aspect will be available with online play remains to be seen.

> "HALF THE APPEAL IS IN THE REALISM – YOU CAN RUIN YOUR RACING CAREER WITH A BIT OF CARELESS DRIVING"



There's no better way to spend your cash than to blow it all on a snazzy paint job.

Some races will let you wow the crowds with your driving skills. This is a great way to earn some 'spect from your rivals.





TEAM PROFILE

■ Although only officially 'born' in January 2003, the Juice Games team has been working together for the best part of a decade, firstly at Digital Image Design (one of the UK's best flight-simulation developers) and later as Rage Warrington. This is Juice Games' first venture into the console market.

HISTORY

- ERACER 2001 [PC]
- RAGE RALLY 2001 [PC]
- EUROFIGHTER TYPHOON 2001 [PC]

■ Not the best way to take a corner. A trip to the garage is probably going to be in order some time soon.

> "JUICED IS NOT JUST ANOTHER RACING GAME, IT IS AN EXTENSION OF THE CULTURE THAT EMBODIES STREET RACING"
> *ROD COUSENS, CEO, ACCLAIM*

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

LESS PACE, MORE KIT

NFS: UNDERGROUND - SPEED + LOTS OF MODS = JUICED

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: THE MAGICAL HOOD



Use Link's new gadget to suck up objects and fire them at enemies or, er, walls.

Look familiar? This huge boss – as in most *Zelda* games – can be tough until you learn its weakness…

DETAILS

FORMAT: Game Boy Advance
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Nintendo
DEVELOPER: Capcom
RELEASE: 2005
GENRE: Adventure
PLAYERS: 1-4

Link returns for a brand new adventure that will combine the series' dungeon-trawling antics with the ability to shrink for tiny adventures.

"IT'S SO STIMULATING BEING YOUR HAT"

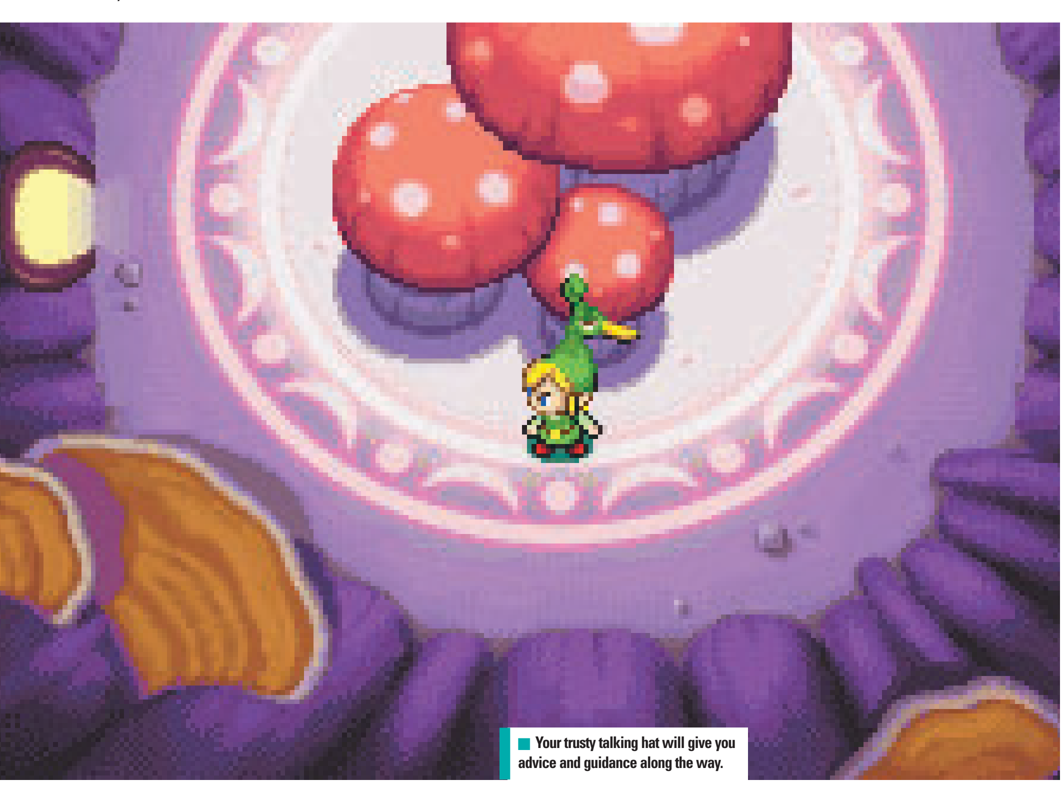
Whether he's composed of a couple of hundred pixels, a handful of blurry polygons or an opinion-dividing piece of cel-shading, Link has a curious effect on people. On the lowest end of the scale, the upper edges of the mouth are liable to rise involuntarily, while more severe cases of infatuation can lead to outbursts of uncontrollable whooping due to a condition known as 'Fanboy Mouth'. Even Nintendo bigwig Shigeru Miyamoto was seen displaying signs of the final stage of the obsession at this year's E3 – in a moment of *Zelda*-fuelled euphoria, Miyamoto-san grabbed a sword and shield to take on the persona of Link, taking his first tentative steps into the terrifying world of cosplay. But even we couldn't bring ourselves to dress up before getting our hands on *The Magical Hood*… which isn't to say that it isn't looking very impressive.

"THE MINISH CAP OFFERS PRETTY MUCH EVERYTHING YOU CAN ASK FOR FROM A HANDHELD TITLE"

From our brief playtest, we've already seen better and more imaginative puzzles than can be found in the majority of recent adventuring wannabes – quite a feat for a handheld title. The game will incorporate many of the weapons, items and gadgets for which Link has developed a taste over the years, as well as the silly talking headgear of the game's title. The hat grants our hero the ability to shrink to a miniscule size and take on massive new quests to aid the Minish people, a race of little chaps who just happen to need the help of the elven legend. There are stylistic elements and enemies pinched straight from *The Wind Waker*, which work remarkably well on the small screen, as well as a few clever effects that just go to show that there's plenty of life left in the GBA.

With the handheld branch of the *Zelda* series never having failed to impress yet, we have no doubt that *The Magical Hood* will be a fantastic and lengthy adventure. We're especially looking forward to seeing just what degree of multiplayer support is in the finished game – Nintendo has confirmed support for up to four players, and the new wireless adaptor would lead us to believe that a *Four Swords*-style co-operative/versus mode will be included.

Whatever it may be, it's rare that a first-party GBA title really disappoints, but we'll just have to wait until next year to see whether we'll be left smirking, screaming or, God forbid, donning a green tunic and making a Master Sword out of cardboard and tin foil…



Your trusty talking hat will give you advice and guidance along the way.


eMag

GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS



■ The combat system has improved immensely, with much of its solidity due to a tarted-up *Manhunt* system.

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

YOUR NAME'S TIM WESTWOOD, YOU'RE NOT COMIN' IN

GRAND THEFT AUTO + WESTSIDE x "FOUR" = GTA: SAN ANDREAS

"WE ARE STARTING TO BECOME VERY PROUD OF WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED AND WE CAN'T WAIT TO GET THE GAME INTO PLAYERS' HANDS"

SAM HOUSER, PRESIDENT, ROCKSTAR GAMES

■ Same old story – the cops trying to bust your 'ass' while you're 'chilling' in your 'hood'. Or something.

Chopper-style BMX bikes are the way forward, although tapping the X button to accelerate takes some getting used to.



DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ Formerly DMA Design, Rockstar North was formed in September 1999 after being purchased by Rockstar's parent company, Take 2. Based in the heart of Edinburgh, the company's 3D update of its own *GTA* series has helped it earn the reputation of one of the UK's most accomplished developers.

HISTORY

- **MANHUNT** 2003 [Multi]
- **GTA: VICE CITY** 2002 [Multi]
- **GRAND THEFT AUTO III** 2001 [Multi]

ROCKSTAR GIVES US ONE FOR OUR HOMIES

DETAILS

FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: Rockstar Games
DEVELOPER: Rockstar North
RELEASE: 22 Oct
GENRE: Action Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

■ Similar to Vice City but with more to it, a different theme (more gangsta than gangster) and bigger. Much, much bigger.

Far be it for us to dictate when you should begin anticipating a game, but we reckon that the time to start getting properly excited about the new instalment of the *Grand Theft Auto* series is right about… now. Okay, so much of the news about *GTA: San Andreas* so far has been based on speculation rather than hard facts, hence our reluctance to express anything more than a general keenness for the game. However, thanks to Rockstar actually showing us why the game is worth getting hot and bothered about, everything is good with the world once more.

So, forget 'orange' and say hello to the new word that sums up what Rockstar is attempting to do with *San Andreas*: 'ambition'. Going on some of the things that Rockstar is trying to achieve over and above what *Vice City* or even *GTA III* offered, it's becoming clear that the developer has had a plan all along – to create a living, breathing environment that's as real as you can get without compromising gameplay opportunities. Each game has inched closer to the realisation, and Rockstar claims *San Andreas* is the nearest yet, not just in terms of populous and atmosphere (although it certainly fulfils both criteria), but also in size.

Case in point: the San Andreas of the title is a state, rather than a city, with three districts (Los Santos, San Fierro and Las Venturra) that are each the size of Vice City – and we mean the whole of Vice City, complete with expanses of countryside, desert and other backwater areas to explore. It's a hugely ambitious claim, but going on what we've been shown we're willing to believe that a game over four times the size of the last could be possible.

However, an increase in size is just the tip of the improvement iceberg. Despite the core concept of the game remaining relatively unchanged (control main character, complete missions, further the story), it's in the details that Rockstar is really adding the polish. There just appears to be more of everything; more visual detail and atmosphere, more interiors to explore (including the ability to rob houses and stores), more nuances to the way your character, Carl Johnson, handles (including a hugely enhanced lock-on system 'borrowed' from *Manhunt*) and, most importantly, more of a point to everything you do. Rather than proving distractions from the main story, side missions now mean something in the grand scheme of things and it no longer feels like there are breaks in the storyline, which makes everything seem more authentic.

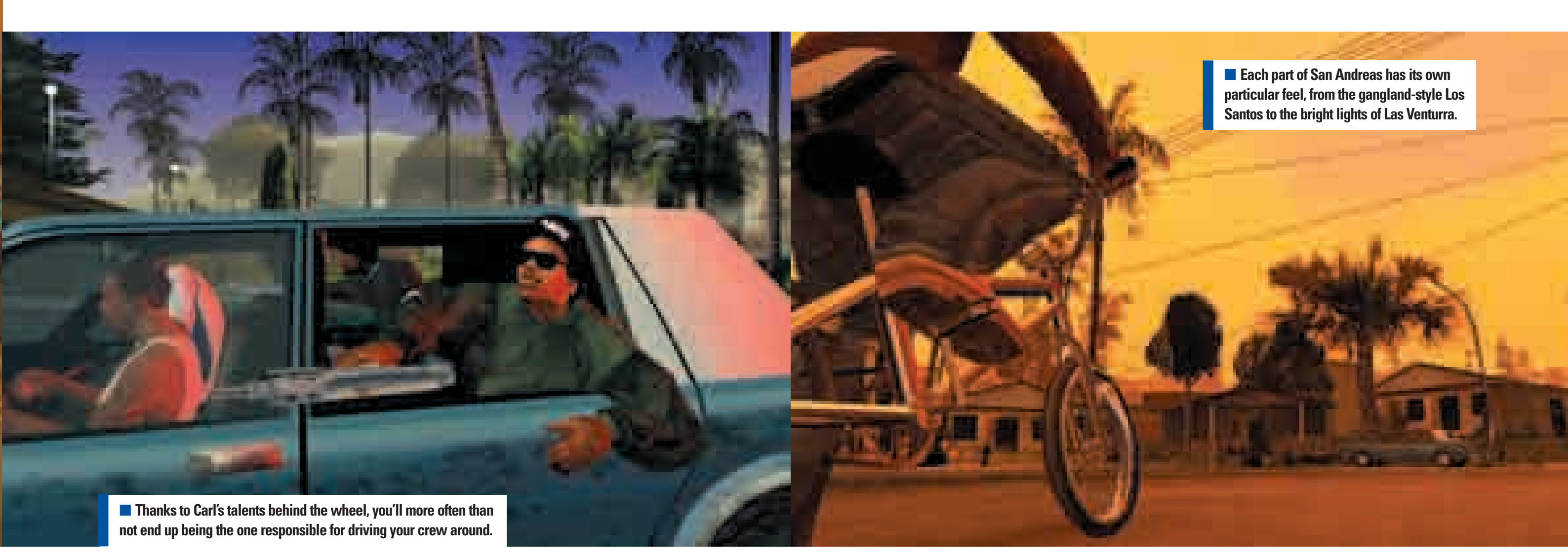
There are also a number of different mission styles that have been introduced for *San Andreas*, including drive-bys (you drive the car, while your three-man crew's shooting highlights the improved AI) and first-person car-chase shooting segments that don't appear as solid as we might have hoped. Fingers crossed, these will be tightened up before the October release.

This minor concern aside, it's hard not to be impressed with what Rockstar is trying to do with *San Andreas*. With promises of the difficulty adapting to how well you're doing, a huge range of licensed music, and, hopefully, a few famous faces among the voice cast, we just hope the game lives up to expectations.

PHAT WITH A CAPITAL F

While *San Andreas* retains an element of *Vice City*'s superficial character modification – you can take Carl to the barber for a trim, for instance – you'll also need to keep Carl fed. A stamina bar indicates Carl's fitness level and it needs to be maintained with regular meals. However, it's a careful balance; too little food leaves you malnourished, while too much turns Carl into a candidate for fat camp. Not only are both states reflected in Carl's appearance, but they also affect which missions you can do – you can't outrun the cops if you can't even jog.

> "IF SAN ANDREAS MANAGES TO DELIVER ALL OF ROCKSTAR NORTH'S PROMISES, IT'LL CEMENT THE STUDIO'S PLACE IN HISTORY"



■ Thanks to Carl's talents behind the wheel, you'll more often than not end up being the one responsible for driving your crew around.

■ Each part of San Andreas has its own particular feel, from the gangland-style Los Santos to the bright lights of Las Venturra.

FABLE



A range of weapons are available, from close-up melee arms to long-distance bows.

The effects of a wholesome lifestyle shine through when everyone cheers your arrival.

THIS IS NO FAIRY TALE – IT REALLY IS GOING TO BE THIS GOOD…

So the best things come to those who wait, do they? Try telling that to Tanner, Captain Rhama and Lara Croft. Long development times can be a real hindrance, building expectations up to unrealistic levels that can prove impossible to meet. It's something developer Big Blue Box is acutely aware of as *Fable* finally nears completion after four years. True, the game has shed a few pounds along the way – most notably in the form of a multiplayer mode that's been omitted – yet this action-adventure RPG is in rude health and looks set to banish the long-development fears with embarrassing ease.

In true RPG fashion, *Fable* opens as you'd expect – there's a burning village, your family are mercilessly killed and you are the only survivor. After the training section, however, the story slowly insinuates that some of your family may have been kidnapped rather than killed, no doubt setting up a central villain. Yet it's only by breaking away from the path that this story lays out for you that the true ambition and promise lurking beneath the surface becomes clear. Challenges can be accepted, buildings can be bought and rented out, NPCs can be hit or insulted, pub games can be played and the world can be explored at your leisure, leaving you to hunt for more obscure quests and items.

The further you delve into the game, the more you become aware of other characters' responses to you. Using a Good and Evil dynamic similar to *Knights Of The Old Republic*'s Light and Dark side, reactions to your character change according to how you behave. Perform noble deeds such as saving villagers in the picnic area from being attacked by wasps and the residents of Bowerstone will run up to you and applaud when you first set foot in their town. Conversely, build up your Evil reputation and you'll be greeted with jeers and hisses wherever you go.

What's interesting is that there are far more opportunities for earning Good or Evil points than you might first think, making for a much more fluid experience. Even your appearance makes a difference – bald heads covered with tattoos are more likely to instil fear than affection while being seen out drinking will make villagers think less of you, especially if you drink to the point of throwing up.

Themes such as marriage are also explored. You can flirt with the working-class girls of Bowerstone and take their hand in marriage – after all, they're impressed more easily than upper-class ladies and more likely to fall for cheap engagement rings. But that doesn't mean you can't flirt with other girls, nor does it mean you can't take those other girls back to meet your wife, causing the women to fight. Your wife could walk out at any time if you don't shower her with enough gifts and compliments, or she could join you in Bonnie and Clyde-style escapades, as you both break into houses. And who's to say that you have to marry someone of the opposite sex? Not Big Blue Box, with gay relationships an option for your hero.

There's still much to be seen, of course, with a two-hour playtest of a game with this much scope proving to be a toe in the water rather than a full-on paddle. Yet there was enough in this short taster to show that if *Fable* replicates this gameplay and stretches it tight over a full game, it will comfortably eclipse our sky-high expectations and prove that some games really are worth waiting for.

DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: Microsoft
DEVELOPER: Big Blue Box
RELEASE: Oct '04 (US: Sept '04)
GENRE: RPG
PLAYERS: 1

A truly massive adventure that combines the good/evil dynamic with a traditional RPG story and plenty of action combat.

EXPRESS YOURSELF

While there are plenty of challenges to discover, interacting with the NPCs through expression is just as much fun. To begin with, only simple expressions are available, such as laughing. As you gain more expressions, you'll be able to pull manly arm poses to impress the women you meet, sneer at travellers if you've developed an unsavoury reputation, or belch at passers-by. The reactions are worth it – fart at a villager and he'll waft away the smell in disgust while holding his nose… it's all part of developing your personality within the *Fable* world. And if you don't like any of the reactions you come across, there's always the middle-finger expression to ensure you have the last word.

"FABLE SHOULD COMFORTABLY ECLIPSE OUR SKY-HIGH EXPECTATIONS AND PROVE THAT SOME GAMES ARE WORTH WAITING FOR"



DEVELOPER PROFILE

As the first external studio to be accepted by Lionhead Studios as a satellite developer, Big Blue Box finds itself in a very enviable position. Founded in 1999 by Simon Carter, Dene Carter and Ian Lovett, the company gets development freedom and full support from Lionhead, effectively receiving the best of both worlds.

HISTORY

Fable is the first game to be developed by Big Blue Box

Every environment in *Fable* boasts incredible attention to detail, with phenomenal texturing and lighting.

Being evil might sound great, but do you really think you can pull off those horns? The devil look is so 1998…

"I'M INCREDIBLY HAPPY WITH WHAT FABLE IS"

PETER MOLYNEUX, LIONHEAD STUDIOS

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

I'M FREE, TO DO WHAT I WANT

RPG + ACTION x FREEDOM = FABLE


eMag

OUTRUN 2



Regular cars will clutter up the road, so storm past them.

Pull off tricks to earn more Hearts from your lovely lady.

DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: SEGA
DEVELOPER: Sumo Digital / AM2
RELEASE: Oct '04 (Japan: TBC, US: Oct '04)
GENRE: Racing
PLAYERS: 1-8

An update of the classic arcade title, *OutRun 2* involves driving the world's fastest Ferraris around 15 exotic race stages.

BURNING RUBBER AND LEAVING SKID MARKS ALL OVER YOUR XBOX

Racing Ferraris through busy traffic was, is, and always will be cool. This is the ethos that SEGA's classic racer lives by, and ever since the arcade update appeared in amusement palaces last year the console-owning public has been thirsting for a version that doesn't sap vast handfuls of loose change in one short, sweet sitting. These prayers have been answered, but this ambitious project could well surpass anybody's imaginations.

One thing that should be made clear is that *OutRun 2* is not a simple port of the arcade game produced by the legendary AM2. Although it looks fine running on the Xbox, this version is a far more complete experience – a package stuffed to bursting with extra features and unlockable goodies, which is something that simply can't be offered in a public coin-op game. So, what's new?

Well, the main addition is the Mission mode that presents various challenges to really test your driving skills. These missions may involve knocking over cones, driving through gates, staying within certain boundaries on the track, or just pulling off enormous, lady-dampening power slides. The missions will then unlock a mass of SEGA-related goodies that can be used in different parts of the game.

Although details of these extras are largely under wraps there are a few certainties, including two sets of bonus tracks that have been adapted from two other famous AM2 franchises. With a hundred challenges to beat, it's safe to say that *OutRun 2* will be an essential purchase, even for those who have already lost plenty of cash to the arcade machines.

Aside from the Mission mode, the rest of the game remains a perfect copy of the coin-op. All the cars are unlocked at the start, so it's a case of picking your favourite Ferrari, selecting your soundtrack of choice, and then burning off from the start line. The track is the usual pyramid shape, and can be tackled in either Straight Racing mode, Heart Attack or online via Xbox Live. The addition of Live was always on the cards for an Xbox version but until recently no specifics had been available. The online section of the game supports up to eight players, and is split into Straight Racing (traffic and all) and a Time Attack mode that enables players to upload their times to an online scoreboard.

OutRun 2 is a real coup for the Xbox, and with the addition of online play it could rekindle the success that blessed the original series.

"OUTRUN 2 WILL BE AN ESSENTIAL BUY, EVEN FOR THOSE WHO'VE LOST ALL THEIR CASH TO THE ARCADE VERSION"



Driving between traffic cones *can* earn you love. Ace.

A range of Ferraris are at your disposal. Use them wisely.

RESIDENT EVIL 4



■ Yeah, he's big, but no-one ever got anywhere by shouting. Shoot his mind in – that'll teach him.

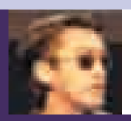
"WITH A SLEW OF NEW AND REDESIGNED CONCEPTS, RESIDENT EVIL 4 PRESENTS A FEAR MORE REAL THAN EVER BEFORE"
TODD THORSON, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING, CAPCOM USA

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW

RESIDENT EVIL - ZOMBIES + ANGRY MOBS = RESIDENT EVIL 4

■ The graphics are unlike anything we've seen on the Cube, as are the scythe-wielding monks. Freaks.



DEVELOPER PROFILE

Far more handsome than this old stock photo lets on, Shinji Mikami has shaped Capcom as we know it to the same extent as Miyamoto at Nintendo or Kojima at Konami. Responsible for – or at least involved in – the firm's hottest properties, neither continuation nor innovation seem to cause this man any problems.

HISTORY

- **P.N.03** 2003 [Cube]
- **RESIDENT EVIL ZERO** 2003 [Cube]
- **ONIMUSHA: WARLORDS** 2001 [PS2]



Smarter than your average zombie, these guys understand teamwork.

All the weapons have satisfyingly messy after-effects.

DETAILS

FORMAT: GameCube
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Capcom
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: Q4 '04
GENRE: Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

Capcom trades zombies and viruses for angry foreigners and an Eighties scrolling beat-'em-up plot as former survivor Leon S. Kennedy goes after the President's daughter and gets more than he bargained for.

1, 2, 3, 4, GET WITH THE WICKED

Zombies are rubbish. Fact. While they're often bundled with reanimated skeletons and mummies in a folder marked 'undead', zombies actually share more similarities with old people than they do with any creature of the night. Think about it – they shuffle around, moan a bit and are generally the least threatening things you'll ever see. Being chased by one? Push it over, close a door and walk for your life.

Sure, the media has gone out of its way to develop zombies into something scarier. *Dawn Of The Dead*, *28 Days Later* and even the GameCube remake of the original *Resident Evil* all feature these turbo-charged monstrosities, but after finally realising how lame they really are, Capcom has ditched the undead theme. Trouble is, there's a bit more psychology involved when the thing you're shooting at a) could actually be human and b) comes apart with worrying ease and realism.

Fans of *Resident Evil 2* – the most graphic title in the series to date – will be glad to hear that full body carnage returns once more. Well-placed pistol bullets can take a head clean off, shotgun shells have enough of a kick to fire enemies through doors or windows while grenades can send entire regiments of the odd villagers (and believe us, they do hunt in terrifying numbers) skywards in agony. Dropping, or at least burying, the Umbrella Corporation and virus themes has been a very smart move by Capcom. Without the lethargic zombie stereotype to live up to, your enemies lose the predictability that has plagued every other *RE* game, and when you see them working together just to hold your severed head high, you'll remember why this was once seen as the scariest series ever. More importantly, you'll believe it again.

Despite the monumental leap forward in terms of visuals and the bold step out of the traditional storyline, much of the classic *Resident Evil* formula remains untouched. Health top-ups still come by way of questionable herbs (although you do have a proper vitality gauge now) and the whole game still adheres to classic 'Dude, Where's My Ammo?' principles. In fact, not only does the game feel enough like a *Resident Evil* title to justify its name from the off but you really do have to wonder why elements like the context-sensitive Action button have been so long in coming to the series.

This new degree of interactivity brings a whole new dimension to the game – be it for checking a blood-stained bed for a few much-needed bullets or fending off hordes of bloodthirsty… things, the A button will be among your most potent weapons. There's still a lot we haven't been allowed to see, of course – we can but hope that Capcom's juggling of Geo-Mod elements, advanced AI, a new storyline and new aesthetic styles doesn't get too convoluted and messy by the time the game is finished.

Exchanging the jumpy thrills the series has been living off for several years for a genuine and constant 'one against the masses' fear, *Resident Evil 4* has rightfully climbed from 'This looks quite good' to 'We need this now' on the patented **games™** Anticipatiometer (which is as majestic a device as it sounds) since we got to play it. Glorious widescreen presentation, visuals many developers have already decreed impossible on the chunky console and a clean slate for the series will all conspire to make the GameCube a very tempting Christmas gift. Cheap hardware and the likes of this, *Paper Mario 2* and *Metroid Prime 2* might even convince those who have already jumped ship to buy back into Nintendo. Then again, don't we say that every time a big exclusive game comes out, and get proved wrong? We'll just shut up and shuffle off, then. Bloody youth of today – don't know you're born…

I'M WITH STUPID

A few months back, if we'd told you that some of the best AI of the year would be found in a *Resident Evil* game, you'd have laughed us into the middle of next week. But, scarily enough, it's true. Be it villager, spooky monk or the oversized troll boss that was runner up in TV's *Michelle Idol*, you'll see enemies scurrying away so they can pelt you with torches and knives, dodging bullets and occasionally explosives, working effectively in packs and actually using advanced tactics to catch you off guard and kill your face off. Indeed, we've found ourselves stranded on rooftops only to have ladders pushed up for the masses to climb while our attention is drawn to a few disturbing stragglers. Suffice to say that a chainsaw to the back of the neck hurts like hell.

> "DROPPING, OR AT LEAST BURYING, THE UMBRELLA CORPORATION AND VIRUS THEMES HAS BEEN A VERY SMART MOVE BY CAPCOM"

FAHRENHEIT



The screen spitting like this should aid you in some of the more stealthy areas of the game.

Looks like a bit of a scuffle has just been missed. Either that or someone's a very bad shot.

WILL QUANTIC DREAM'S LATEST OFFERING LEAVE US COLD?

PS2 **It's been all quiet on the Quantic Dream front for a while.** Since the release of the bizarre yet innovative Bowie-fest *Omikron: The Nomad Soul* back in 1999, nothing has emerged from the studio except the odd rumbling about the new technologies that it's been working on. Knowing this, when the *Fahrenheit* demo appeared at E3, curiosity made us wonder whether these new technologies were going to be flaunted, how good they are, how (or if) they would improve gameplay and whether they were worth the time that Quantic Dream has spent working on them. Unfortunately, all of the demo viewing in the world can't answer these questions properly, so until we get to sit down with an actual copy of the game, speculation over a handful of in-game screenshots, a few demos and a press release is going to have to do.

The setting? New York, and it's cold… very cold. Waking up one morning, a fierce set of flashbacks reminds you of the fact that you unwillingly performed a grisly ritual murder the previous night. This is pretty bad at the best of times, but these ritual killings have become something of a recurring theme over the last few months and you are just the latest in a long line of ordinary men who have been possessed and forced into doing these things.

As usual, the police are blinkered to the possible involvement of supernatural forces and are after your rear. This is your cue to run around a lot, avoid the authorities and discover the truth about what's going on by playing as various characters in the ever-twisting storyline.

Arguably the most interesting aspect of the game is the possibility of otherworldly powers that your character may be able to access. By the look of things, to aid you on your journey you're 'cursed' with visions. These are the direct result of performing the ritual to begin with, but exactly how these work remains to be seen. A killer's-eye view à la *Forbidden Siren* seems likely; or some form of premonition ability that gives you an early warning of events to come (thus allowing you to plan your course of action in advance) could work well.

To add to the depth of the game, a new innovation, namely the 'MultiView' system, has been used to full effect. Well, we say new, to see similar screen-splitting effects just have a glance in the general direction of Ubisoft's *XIII*. However, where Ubisoft used this effect in a simple, non-threatening comic-style, Quantic Dream has added a more sinister edge, which provides a menacing look that's not dissimilar from watching an episode of *24*. It also seems that this effect will not just be for show, but a crucial gameplay element.

With one section of the screen showing your traditional third-person view and another looking down on the crowded interior of your next destination, you will have to plan ahead and use both views effectively to sneak your way around and avoid the gaze of your accusers. This will make a nice change from the 'hiding behind crates and peeping around corners' routine that every stealth developer has been up to of late, and this may well set *Fahrenheit* apart from the crowd.

Of course, the game will be competing in a genre that's hardly short of titles right now, but the dark story and innovative style may mark it out for special attention.

"THE POLICE ARE BLINKERED TO THE POSSIBLE INVOLVEMENT OF SUPERNATURAL FORCES AND ARE AFTER YOUR REAR"

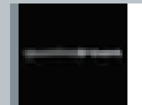
BREAK THE MOULD

Something on which Quantic Dream has apparently worked very hard is getting the blend of cinema and interactivity just right. Although the game is meant to feel like a film, your input supposedly shapes the way that things play out, and when you take control of a different character the way you view the world distorts to suit the mood and feeling of your new character – another very interesting idea if it's fully realised. In an extension of the movie feel, the more action-based sections of the game will be controlled in the same way as the Quick-Time Events in *Shenmue*. Although this might not appeal to those who prefer a more tactical battle rather than 'Simon Says' button-mashing, from the footage we've seen of a fight with a couple of stone angels, it's obvious that it suits the style of the game perfectly.

DETAILS

FORMAT: PS2, Xbox, PC
ORIGIN: France
PUBLISHER: Sierra
DEVELOPER: Quantic Dream
RELEASE: Nov '04
GENRE: Action
PLAYERS: 1

Take control of Lucas Kane as you try to evade the police and figure out why various people – you included – are brutally murdering innocents.



DEVELOPER PROFILE

Founded in 1997, Quantic Dream is based in Paris and is headed by David Cage. The firm's first title, *Omikron: The Nomad Soul*, won more than 20 international awards and starred David Bowie (who also provided the soundtrack). The last few years have seen Quantic Dreams working on new technologies and *Fahrenheit* marks its return.

HISTORY

OMIKRON: THE NOMAD SOUL 1999 [Multi]

Danger is everywhere, but there is no fear greater than that caused by giant dust mites.

As you're rudely awakened by the phone it pops up in the corner of the screen. A nice touch.

"FAHRENHEIT CREATES A NEW BREED OF INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT, MERGING CINEMA AND INTERACTIVITY"
QUANTIC DREAM WEBSITE

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

UNDEAD-FREE PSYCHOLOGICAL THRILLER

FORBIDDEN SIREN + ZOMBIES x NEW YORK = FAHRENHEIT

Even a task as simple as washing your hands warrants three camera angles at once.

VIRTUA QUEST



"AS THE PLAYER EXPLORES, HE WILL DISCOVER INFORMATION ABOUT THE MARTIAL ARTS ABILITIES OF THE LEGENDARY VIRTUA FIGHTER CHARACTERS"
SEGA AMERICA PRESS RELEASE

Yes, there's fighting, but don't expect standard *Virtua Fighter* mechanics.

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

VIRTUALLY FIGHT FREE

VIRTUA FIGHTER - MAD SKILLZ + KIDS = VIRTUA QUEST

Do not adjust your set – that's just a bit of Matrixy static stuff.

See, it's just like *Virtua Fighter*, but even more, um, virtual.



DEVELOPER PROFILE

SEGA AM2 is perhaps best known as the developer of the *Virtua* games. Usually starting in the arcade, the games were quickly converted to SEGA's own consoles thanks to similar technology used in the platforms. Since the death of the Dreamcast this means that SEGA's games are reaching out to embrace all fans of 'home-arcading'.

HISTORY

- **SHENMUE II** 2001 [Dreamcast]
- **POWER DRIFT** 1988 [Arcade]
- **SPACE HARRIER** 1985 [Arcade]

TAKE THE MOST COMPLEX FIGHTER AND DUMB IT DOWN – IT'S, Y'KNOW, FOR KIDS

DETAILS

FORMAT: GameCube, PS2
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: SEGA
DEVELOPER: SEGA AM2
RELEASE: TBA (Japan: 26 Aug, US: Oct '04)
GENRE: Action/RPG
PLAYERS: 1

Virtua Fighter for kids, but with 'fun' RPG-ing and platforming surrounding the bloody fisticuffs.

***Virtua Quest* is a funny one.** Developed by SEGA AM2 and 'starring' the *Virtua Fighter* cast, surely that can only mean one thing – *Virtua Fighter 5*? Sadly not. Instead, try 'odd RPG with platforming and beat-'em-up elements set in a virtual world'. In this crazy world, you play Sei – a boy with the uncanny ability to unlock Virtual Souls where the abilities of the *Virtua Fighter* cast are trapped. By finding these Souls and subsequently beating the hell out of Akira and the rest of the fighters, you can gain these moves and attacks for yourself.

Sei's ability to harness the power of the Virtual Souls piques the interest of a syndicate known as Judgement 6, which wants to use Sei and his powers to destroy the virtual world and eventually the real one. Which brings on the fighting. Putting up your dukes in the virtual world, Sei becomes master of all martial arts and stands toe-to-toe with the best Judgement 6 can throw at him. Unlike the incredibly tricky controls of the *Virtua Fighter* series, you only have to push a few buttons to perform amazing attacks – those expecting the complexities of the beat-'em-ups will no doubt come away disappointed. The attacks are dependent on distance and what action you're performing at the time – running, jumping, standing there taking a beating and so on.

There are also some nice incidental touches. In one scene, Sei is fighting in a bar room with all the associated props: pool table, bar stools, optics and so on. As the fight ensues, these props smash to smithereens before disappearing, rather fancifully, as binary data being sucked into the floor – just like being in the Matrix but without the nonsensical philosophy and wooden acting.

What is wooden about *Virtual Quest* are the controls. These are particularly important because there's a lot of *Prince Of Persia*-style running and jumping. While *POP* had its four directions, it fooled you into not really noticing by using diagonals. Here, though, it seems that you're supposed to only think in these four directions; jumps have to be lined up for perfect accuracy, wall running can be a bit of an eye-bender as you try to work out which direction you need to be holding, and swinging on Sei's Energy Wire is a rather hit-and-drop affair. Plus, all this comes with a fuzzy time lag between your button press and the action on screen.

Having played the early Japanese code, everything seems to be a bit like a *Phantasy Star Online* hub – there are people to talk to, things to buy and (ahem) tutorials in the virtual world to go through. We're a bit concerned about the story as well; it is childish, granted, but where *Pokémon Colosseum* had its ridiculous characters and their funny ways of talking to you, it maintained a lot of charm thanks to the monsters themselves. Here, there's very little of that, and between the monosyllabic *VF* guys and Sei's high-pitched vocals, it all feels somewhat lacking.

We have to admit, sadly, that what we've seen of *Virtua Quest* so far hasn't lived up to expectations. Its strangeness has us intrigued, but it feels as though the *Virtua Fighter* angle has been forced into a game where it doesn't belong. That might change with the finished game, but with the release just around the corner, we're not holding our breath.

WHIP IT GOOD

Your Energy Wire lets you act like a futuristic Indiana Jones (only with fewer snakes and no cool hat), latching on to enemies and certain floating points so you can tangle baddies up before giving them a size-three shoeing. It can also be used to swing to distant ledges. Unfortunately, it's not that easy to use. When swinging round a horizontal pole, for instance, your next jump is incredibly difficult to time correctly due to the effects of inertia and the small delay between button presses and the action on screen. This will cause lots of swearing and frustration as you mess up that jump… again. With any luck, there'll be a bit of tweaking on this system – otherwise it'll be a bit like Spider-Man just as he runs out of Web Fluid.

"DURING FIGHTS, PROPS ARE SMASHED AND DISAPPEAR AS BINARY DATA SUCKED INTO THE FLOOR"



Pitting a kid against *Virtua Fighter*'s finest does seem a little unfair.

The visuals are promising so far, but the gameplay needs work.

CREATURE CONFLICT: THE CLAN WARS

THIS TIME, THE FOOD CHAIN DOESN'T COME INTO IT…

Back in the heyday of the *Worms* phenomenon, it was common to hear pleas for the series to make the jump into 3D. It didn't take much thought to realise that it could never match the precision or overall quality of the sprite-based titles, but the demands got more frequent. After a decent effort in the porcine shape of *Hogs Of War*, it all went quiet on the wormy front until Team 17 itself decided to have a stab at the extra dimension. While *Worms 3D* was passable, you'd think gamers would realise that if the series' founders couldn't re-create the magic then it was more or less useless to try. You'd be wrong…

To call this the game *Worms 3D* should have been would be a bit harsh (in any case, *Forts Under Siege* has first call on that handle) but it's fairly close to the truth. Each level is set on a tiny planet that can be fully explored to discover strategic high ground or handy power-ups while fighting off opposing forces and big boss characters. For gun lovers, there's an impressive arsenal of tools with which to kit out your animals and let the fur fly – from traditional machine-guns and bazookas to flamethrowers and high explosives, you'll be able to do battle however you prefer. There are also character-specific melee weapons, each of which has its own effect that could help turn the tide of a battle.

As with many titles that have launched into this genre, the single-player campaign – while a diversion in its own right – serves more to prepare the player for the dizzy heights of online play than to keep them occupied for hours on end. With four factions each sporting four individual units and a terrain generator on top of the 16 existing planetoids, there's scope for almost unlimited multiplayer potential.

With the PC version imminent and console versions planned shortly afterwards, we recommend you look past *Creature Conflict*'s slightly budget feel as beneath the cutesy surface lurks an accomplished little strategy title. If nothing else, this should tide you over to the next instalment in the *Worms* franchise, which is also looking a lot better than its predecessor. It'll probably be a long time before we see *Worms 4D* anyway…



Find yourself swimming at the end of a turn and a single shot from any weapon will kill you outright.

"THIS GAME HAS WORMS-ESQUE STRATEGY BUT WITH MORE CUTESY CHARACTERS"

DETAILS

FORMAT: PC, PS2, Xbox
ORIGIN: Hungary
PUBLISHER: Cenega
DEVELOPER: Mithis Entertainment
RELEASE: 17 Sept
GENRE: Strategy
PLAYERS: 1 (1-4 online)

Take a team of animals into battle on tiny planets with nothing but potent firearms to help you.



Each little planet is covered in weapons and power-ups to make your life easier.

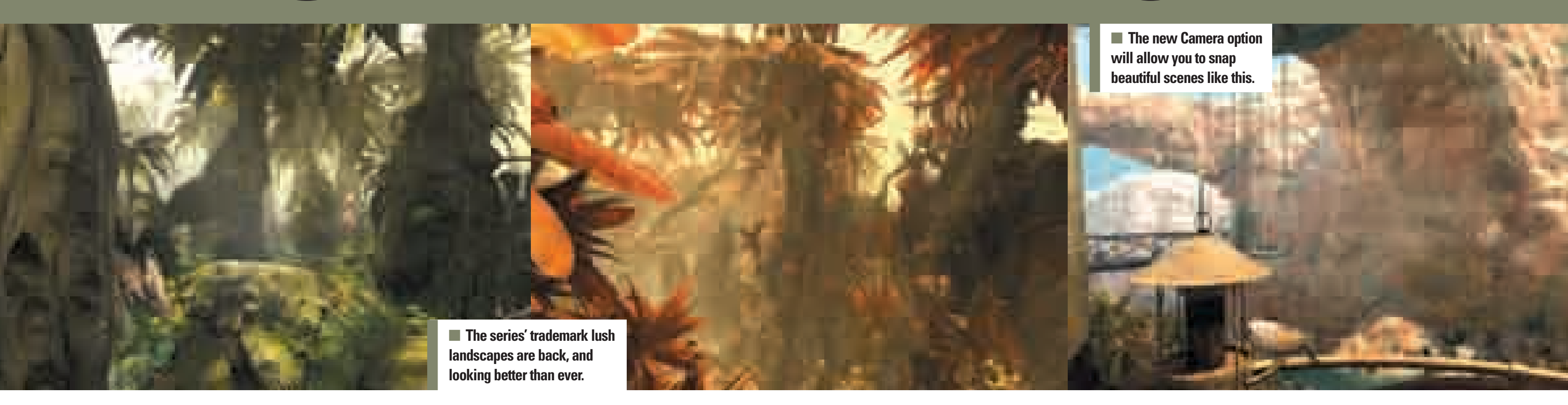




Like in *Worms*, you'll have a limited amount of time to move, unleash hell and get out of harm's way.


eMag

MYST IV: REVELATION



The series' trademark lush landscapes are back, and looking better than ever.

The new Camera option will allow you to snap beautiful scenes like this.

DETAILS

FORMAT: PC
ORIGIN: France
PUBLISHER: Ubisoft
DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Montreal
RELEASE: Oct '04
GENRE: Puzzle Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

Using a combination of exploration and puzzle solving, discover the secrets of the Myst world and attempt to put an end to Atrius' villainous sons' troublemaking.

PLAY MYSTY FOR ME

Over the last ten years the *Myst* series has divided gamers. There are those who have never managed to get to grips with the sprawling titles and, when prompted to spend an hour rotating several hidden lanterns in order to reflect coloured light beams onto a grasshopper's left leg, would simply curse at the lack of fun, switch off and play something else. The rest, however, would do the exact opposite, and get fully involved in this new world that's been laid out before them, playing continuously – and, dare we say, obsessively – until completion.

The latest in the franchise looks unlikely to buck this trend and those who enjoyed the earlier titles aren't going to be disappointed. As usual, the scenery looks gorgeous, the puzzles are devilish and the story looks set to tidy up a few of those unanswered questions left over from the previous games. Jack Wall, the award-winning composer who worked on *Myst III*, has returned to provide the epic score and, as an added bonus for those Genesis fans out there, a new Peter Gabriel track, *Curtains*, will also be included.

That said, there was never going to be a problem reeling in the existing *Myst* fan base; the real challenge facing Ubisoft is appealing to those players who found (and still find) the games inaccessible. The feature that's been added to try to snare these types is a Help option that promises to take the frustration away, if you wish. This will offer you three levels of assistance on any given puzzle, level one being a gentle nudge in the right direction and level three completely solving the puzzle for you. Obviously, Ubisoft is well aware that this may just be a little too tempting for the weaker willed of us and it's been cleverly implemented so you can opt to disable this element during installation, leaving you free to pore over the puzzles without the solution sitting annoyingly under your nose.

That's not all, though. Also new is a Camera mode that lets you take snaps of your journey, and a new Flashback ability that gives you more insight into the history of each area. Who said you can't teach an old dog new tricks?

With all this icing on the legendary cake, there's no doubt *Myst* lovers will be stampeding in the direction of their local game store on release day. And who knows? Maybe the new features will lure in some of those who aren't so fond of pushing lanterns around.

"THE SCENERY IS GORGEOUS, THE PUZZLES ARE DEVILISH AND THE STORY TIES UP A FEW LOOSE ENDS"



Places like this will make fans of the previous games feel right at home.

Creatures will now play an active part in some puzzles. Luckily, this one's well dead.


eMag

DEVIL MAY CRY 3



■ The atmosphere is a mix of gothic splendour and rock excess. Nice.

■ Enemies are bigger, badder and there's a lot more of them…

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

BETTER THE DEVIL YOU KNOW… WE HOPE

DEVIL MAY CRY + SIBLING RIVALRY x RAWK! = DEVIL MAY CRY 3

"IN ADDITION TO ITS STRONG ROOTS, THE GAME INCREASES THE INTENSITY OF GAMEPLAY WITH A NEW 'STYLE' SYSTEM, WHICH ADDS AN ADDITIONAL LEVEL OF DEPTH"

CAPCOM PRESS RELEASE

■ Combat has been evolved to include great weapon combo potential.



DEVELOPER PROFILE

Capcom, whether or not you wish to include Clover Studios' wares under that banner, certainly knows how to exploit its IP to the fullest, with *Devil May Cry* joining the *Onimusha* series on its third outing. The number of *Resident Evil* and *Street Fighter* spin-offs for which Capcom is famous barely needs mentioning.

HISTORY

- **ONIMUSHA 3** 2004 [PS2]
- **DEVIL MAY CRY 2** 2003 [PS2]
- **DEVIL MAY CRY** 2001 [PS2]

DEVILISHLY STYLISH, THE ENVY OF MANY. WHAT'S CAPCOM GOT TO CRY ABOUT?

DETAILS

FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Capcom
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: TBA '05
GENRE: Action Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

It's one of the most envied third-person adventure franchises (judging by its influence on today's approach to acrobatic combat) and this third instalment seeks to raise the bar even higher…

News that Tsuyoshi Tanaka, the producer behind the lacklustre second instalment of the *Devil May Cry* series, is at the helm for Dante's third outing must have been met with trepidation by fans of the original game. Thankfully, Tanaka-san seems to have got it right this time, as Dante is back to doing what he does best – dispatching enemies with fancy moves and the cockiest attitude around.

For this third game, Tanaka delves into *Devil May Cry* history, telling the story of Dante's conflict with his evil brother Virgil whose mysterious tower rather fortuitously sprouts right next to Dante's detective agency (ensuring a climactic rooftop showdown bathed in moonlight, no doubt). During the game, Dante will also encounter the Lurch-like Arkham – who seems to be Virgil's right-hand… thing – and Lady, a huntress intent on wiping out all traces of demonic forces, including everyone's favourite white-haired half-demon.

Dante's rock star credentials were never in doubt, but *Devil May Cry 3* plays them for laughs – stack amps and guitars litter Dante's detective agency and, later, he's able to launch attacks with a lightning-spewing guitar. While remaining faithful to the bravado that endeared the original game to so many, *Devil May Cry 3* features a number of innovations; a new engine ekes out even more detail from the gothic architecture and run-down environments, while a new select-a-fighting-style system could have a twofold impact – ensuring combat exudes a vibe acceptable to all while boosting longevity in the process.

No matter which style you choose, access to all manner of typically Capcom-esque fighting manoeuvres is granted, though each style has its own exclusive moves. If there's one move that has fired our imaginations, it's Dante's 'Fireworks' gunplay – reminiscent of typical nunchaku movements, the sight of Dante swinging his guns from hand to hand, circling them round his body, has caused many to speculate on its combo potential.

Sticking firmly to its fighting-game roots, a glorious combo system is guaranteed – weapons can even be hot swapped allowing all manner of gun/sword/gun/sword mutilation to take place – and the higher the hit count, the higher the praise from the on-screen prompts. Of course, a combo system would be redundant without a slew of assailants and they come thick and fast. In a similar vein to the *Onimusha* series, defeated enemies release orbs that can be spent at waypoints to power up Dante's stats, as well as to buy weapons and fighting techniques. If there was one area where the *Onimusha* series could have been improved it was this, so hopefully *Devil May Cry 3* will feature a more fleshed-out power-up system.

Another element where Capcom seems to have answered its critics since the last instalment is in boss encounters. Previously suffering from easily exploited soft spots and a weakness to long-distance attacks, the first boss encountered this time around (an icy Cerberus-inspired hellhound) takes no prisoners, attacking with glacial attacks and plenty of canine savagery. No doubt we can expect plenty more thrills if this is the first in line…

Devil May Cry introduced a template for third-person action games that has been adopted by many developers, and while Capcom only seems to be following its own template this time around, it's doing so in a manner that has incredible potential to delight fans. From what we've seen so far, this third game is going the right way to keeping the series admired for a little while longer.

HOT STYLE TIPS FROM THE PROS

Though the roster isn't finalised, the fighting styles available to Dante at the moment are Trickster, Gunslinger, SwordMaster and RoyalGuard. Trickster, as you'd expect, facilitates all manner of wall runs and acrobatics not seen since the outings of a certain Persian prince. Gunslinger adds impetus to Dante's firearms at the expense of swordsmanship, with SwordMaster naturally having the opposite effect. RoyalGuard, on the other hand, reportedly allows all manner of dodging and blocking manoeuvres, though this mode is still to be implemented. No doubt much enjoyment will be derived from tying each mode's strongest moves into audacious combos. The prospect of running amok through enemy ranks then evading them by sprinting up walls has our attention thoroughly piqued.

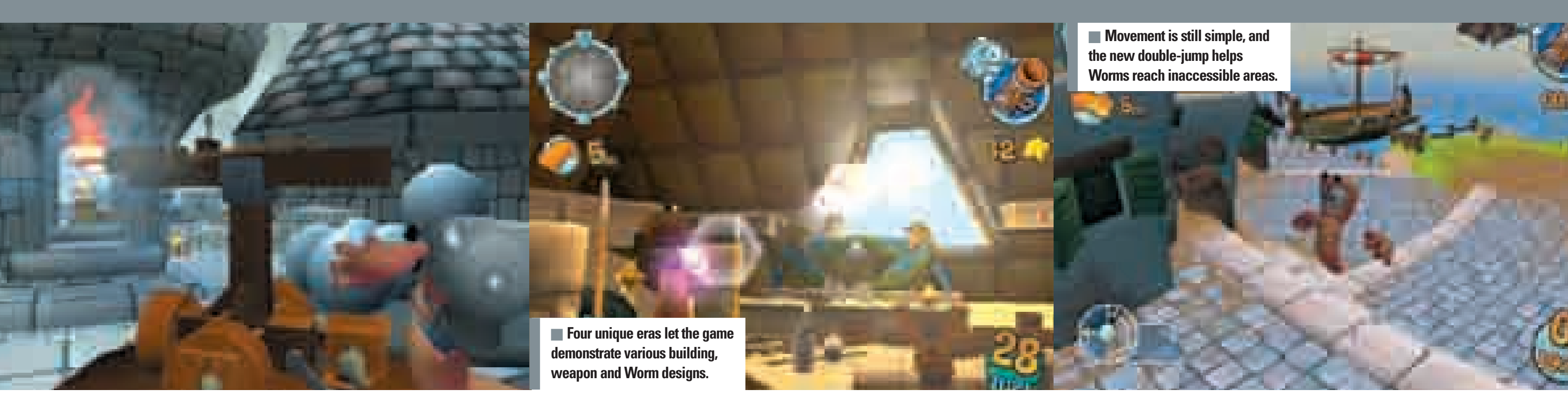
"THE GAME'S INTRO CELEBRATES ROCK-VIDEO EXCESS – DANTE STRUTTING AROUND, POINTING A FINGER IN THE AIR AND REVELLING IN HIS OWN GLORY"



This time around, Dante is less Van Helsing, more Van Halen.

He's got the looks, the moves, the attitude – let's face it, Dante rocks.

WORMS: FORTS UNDER SIEGE



Four unique eras let the game demonstrate various building, weapon and Worm designs.

Movement is still simple, and the new double-jump helps Worms reach inaccessible areas.

WHO'S THE KING OF THE CASTLE NOW, EH?

DETAILS

FORMAT: PS2, Xbox, PC
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: SEGA
DEVELOPER: Team 17
RELEASE: Q3 '04
GENRE: Action Strategy
PLAYERS: 1-4

Team 17 adapts the *Worms* formula again, this time with defence-building elements that will hopefully make better use of the 3D environment.

Check the dictionary for the definition of 'disappointment' and we reckon you'll find a screenshot from *Worms 3D* sitting right beside it. With *Worms* evolving from 1995's simple-yet-addictive *Tanks* adaptation through various graphical and gameplay improvements, the fact that last year's 3D take on the game was so devoid of fun must have been a blow to long-time fans of the series. Nevertheless, Team 17 has again reworked the game's core concepts for *Worms: Forts Under Siege* and this latest premise seems to use the 3D environment to its advantage.

The big change is that while you still control a team of four worms, the focus is as much on building defences as it is on wanton destruction. Wiping out the opposition remains the priority, but there's also the small matter of the new stronghold with which each side begins – by destroying your enemy's property completely, you can win without much bloodshed. Of course, your opponent also has the same option and that's where your defences come into play.

"THE PROCESS OF BUILDING BIGGER DEFENCES THAT YIELD LARGER WEAPONS SEEMS TO BETTER SUIT THE 3D SETTING"

Dotted across the landscape near each stronghold are Star Markers (points that indicate where you can build) and as well as moving and attacking, players can use some of their turn to put up a building on one of those markers. While you can initially only build upon Stars that are next to your stronghold, it's possible to expand your influence as you build outwards; what's more, the size of building you can create is proportionate to the number of Star Markers you already hold. More Stars mean bigger buildings, and bigger buildings mean access to more powerful weaponry. However, a strategic attack can bring everything down around your ears, as buildings not directly linked to your stronghold can be wiped out in one go if your opponent strikes in the right place…

Having seen the game in action, we admit that this approach seems to make more sense in the 3D environment than the previous game. Thankfully, the things that did keep *Worms 3D* true to the series – humorous voices, even more ridiculous weaponry and all-round tongue-in-cheek humour – have been retained for *Forts Under Siege*, and combined with the new concept, we're hoping that this game helps Team 17 regain some of the dignity that it lost with *Worms 3D*.



The bigger your defences, the larger the weapons you can use – like this moose-launching catapult.


eMag

SECOND SIGHT

BET YOU DIDN'T SEE THIS ONE COMING…

So, good news for Free Radical, then. From being an almost finished game with no publisher just a few months ago, *Second Sight* is now in the safe hands of Codemasters. The fact that someone's finally got around to signing Free Radical's first crack at something other than an FPS can only be good news, especially since it means that the developer now only has to concentrate on putting the finishing touches to the game. Of course, with telepathy being all the rage right now – the game will go toe-to-toe, or rather mind-to-mind, with Midway's *Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy* at the end of the year – we hope Codemasters puts a bit of effort into the marketing so people actually buy it.

The promises made by Free Radical are all well and good: an adventure driven heavily by narrative; and stages that alternate between lead character John Vattic's past – with its third-person gunplay – and the present, focused more on his newly acquired telekinetic powers. However, it's the question of how well the game plays that really interests us, and having played through a hefty chunk of what appears to be relatively finished code, we're happy to say that Free Radical seems to have done a good job.

Splitting the game into two very distinct styles definitely helps *Second Sight* avoid the possibility of disjointedness – there's never any confusion as to whether you're meant to be sneaking around or just blasting anything that moves. The flashback-style shooting stages in particular are interesting, as they integrate ideas that have appeared in other recent games into the *TimeSplitters* style that we've come to expect from Free Radical. From the emphasis on taking cover behind walls and other obstacles while facing enemies (à la *kill.switch*) to the ability to 'tweak' the precision of your aim when locked onto an enemy (as in *Everything Or Nothing*), it feels solid enough compared to other, more traditional shooters.

There's also the bonus of your actions in the past affecting certain things in the present, although those we've seen so far have been purely narrative-led so this may not be as crucial to the gameplay as the game's press spiel might suggest. Of course, that even these don't stay as all-out firefight stages for long (mainly because 'past' Vattic gains his psychic powers after a short while) means that stealth and caution are still very much part of the gameplay. Bottom line: if you're looking for an in-your-face blaster that doesn't require much though, *Second Sight* isn't for you.

The only real issue we've got with the game right now – aside from some rather serious clipping problems – is a matter of weight stemming mainly from Vattic's telekinetic abilities, although the same issues arise when Vattic walks into moveable objects. Anything that's not nailed down moves with a disturbing lack of substance, from the wooden crates that feel like they're made of paper, and gas canisters that explode if Vattic even brushes against them, to the horribly limp motions of enemies once you've gained the ability to toss them around like rag dolls. As such, there's a sense of inertia missing from the game, so we're hoping it gets fixed before release, especially since the weight in *Psi-Ops* feels incredibly solid and satisfying by contrast.

That *Second Sight* is a far more subtle and narrative-driven adventure than Midway's effort works in the game's favour, but then that would make it even more of a shame if it ends up falling down on something so obvious.

DETAILS

FORMAT: PS2, Xbox, GameCube
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: Codemasters
DEVELOPER: Free Radical Design
RELEASE: Q4 '04
GENRE: Action Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

Now picked up for release by Codemasters, Free Radical's psychic adventure is nearly here. We just hope it packs enough punch to get noticed…

OUT OF SIGHT

Stealth makes up the bulk of *Second Sight*'s gameplay, and while some may feel the need to make comparisons with *Psi-Ops, Second Sight* is a far more thought-provoking effort. The fact that Vattic regains his abilities fairly slowly means that you have very little to work with in the beginning, with open confrontations between you and gun-toting guards out of the question. It's only much later on – when you regain some of the more damaging powers like the ability to smash enemies into walls or possess their bodies – that you can go one-on-one with them, but even so, staying covert is always a safer option.

> "SWITCHING BETWEEN GAMEPLAY STYLES ALLOWS SECOND SIGHT TO OFFER TWO GAMES MELDED INTO ONE"



See that arcade machine? You can play it. There are several hidden mini-games for you to discover.

You don't regain the ability to lift living enemies off the ground until later – and using it attracts an awful lot of attention…



DEVELOPER PROFILE

One of a small crowd of much sought-after British developers, Free Radical was formed in 1998 after a number of the team behind *GoldenEye* left Rare to set up shop on their own. With both EA and Codemasters having eagerly snapped up projects, the results speak for themselves…

HISTORY

- **TIMESPLITTERS: FUTURE PERFECT** 2004 [Multi]
- **TIMESPLITTERS 2** 2002 [Multi]
- **TIMESPLITTERS** 2000 [PS2]

"ACTIONS OF THE PAST VATTIC HAVE CONSEQUENCES IN THE PRESENT, ALLOWING A UNIQUE INTERACTION BETWEEN THE PLAYER AND THE NARRATIVE"
CODEMASTERS PRESS RELEASE

If you sneak up on opponents using the Charm skill you can knock them out without too much fuss.

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

IT'S ALL IN THE MIND…

PSI-OPS - GUNG-HO ATTITUDE x FUTURE/PAST = SECOND SIGHT

Until you learn how to use some of your powers, you're best off just using good old stealth.

The Sniper Rifle puts the zoomed view in the corner, so you can see any danger around you.

KOHAN II: KINGS OF WAR



With up to six sides in a game, battles will be waged on more than one front.

The new 3D view allows for a greater sense of involvement in the epic sieges and skirmishes.

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

KOHAN THE BARBARIAN?

KOHAN + COSSACKS - C&C = KOHAN II: KINGS OF WAR

"KOHAN II: KINGS OF WAR COMBINES THE AWARD-WINNING GAMEPLAY OF ITS PREDECESSOR WITH NEW GROUND-BREAKING FEATURES"

ADEL CHAVELEH, PRESIDENT, TIMEGATE STUDIOS

KOHAN II: KINGS OF WAR

PC

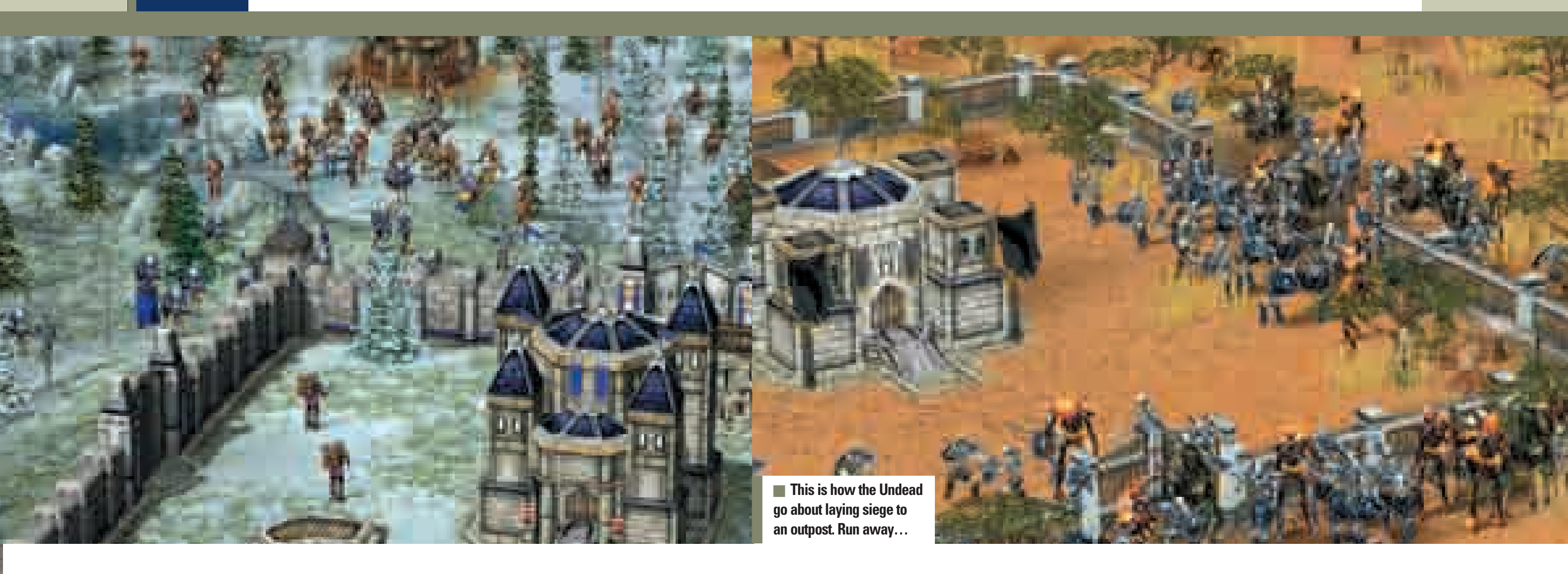


DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ Texas-based Timegate Studios was founded in 1998 by five successful businessmen who were also avid gamers and dreamed of owning their own development house. Its first title, *Kohan: Immortal Sovereigns*, enjoyed considerable critical success, winning a number of Strategy Game Of The Year awards in 2001.

HISTORY

■ **KOHAN: AHRIMAN'S GIFT** 2001 [PC]
■ **KOHAN: IMMORTAL SOVEREIGNS** 2001 [PC]



■ This is how the Undead go about laying siege to an outpost. Run away…

DETAILS

FORMAT: PC
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Take 2
DEVELOPER: Timegate Studios
RELEASE: Summer '04
GENRE: RTS
PLAYERS: 1

■ Following in the steps of *Kohan: Immortal Sovereigns*, this game is promising to retain the hardcore strategy elements of its predecessor, but streamline them to maximise its appeal.

HAS THIS SEQUEL DILUTED THE MAGIC FORMULA A LITTLE TOO MUCH?

When Timegate Studios released its debut title in 2001, it was with little fanfare. However, *Kohan: Immortal Sovereigns* proved to be a breath of fresh air in the RTS genre that was so full of *Command & Conquer* clones. Yet while the critics loved it, the game didn't enjoy particularly impressive sales, a fact that Timegate attributes to the inherently limited appeal of what was a complex and detailed strategy game with plain, simple graphics and a steep learning curve.

Naturally, *Kohan* found favour with the hardcore strategy gamer, but Timegate has clearly decided that specific market is not profitable enough; hence the game universe has been given a complete makeover in time for this full-blown sequel. The aim is clearly to produce a game that appeals to a broader segment of the games-playing public, but only the eventual sales figures will show whether this approach will prove successful or result in a watered-down effort that pleases neither hardcore fan nor casual gamer.

To begin with, the game will now take place in fully 3D environments, as opposed to the 2D isometric efforts of its predecessor. Furthermore, the interface has been streamlined to make it easier to use, although fans of the original are already complaining that this will detract from the detailed gameplay that made the first title so different from the rest of the crowd. However, the fundamentals that helped the original *Kohan* succeed where others failed look set to be included, and Timegate is hopeful that those fans of the original will be won over when final code is released.

The player will control companies of men rather than individual units on the battlefield. Companies can gain experience as they fight, and will follow the orders of the gamer, resulting in an experience similar to commanding an army via orders to its generals rather than to individual troops – one of the strong points of the original *Kohan*. The game will remain focused around these companies and the battles they have, with tactical retreats playing a big part in the game, along with morale (companies will turn tail if they're faced with seemingly insurmountable odds).

Resource management was handled in a similar fashion in *Kohan*, and this will continue in the sequel. Again, rather than tasking the player with hours of messing about collecting wood and gold, the infrastructure that supported an army was simple and hassle-free to manage. The only rules were that a bigger army needed a bigger infrastructure, as units were a constant drain on resources rather than costing a one-off payment. Other than that, things pretty much ran themselves. The sticking point here (even at this early stage) is to just how great an extent the game will automate the management of these individual companies. *Kohan* undoubtedly got the mix just right as far as serious strategy fans were concerned, freeing them from the micro-management that hinders some titles but allowing them the time to concentrate on the bigger picture.

The concern now is that /most of the game will 'play itself', leaving gamers with limited opportunities to actually influence proceedings. Only time will tell if this side of the game proves to be triumphant or terrible.

RACE FOR SUCCESS

The number of races has been increased for this sequel to a total of six, though not all of them have been revealed yet. Serious gamers will have to learn to master all the races rather than just concentrating on one, because it will be possible to capture enemy resources and produce units using their equipment. This means you'll be able to create armies consisting of a number of different races, and mastery of them all will therefore be an essential part of the game. Furthermore, it means greater ebb and flow in battle as a struggling player can double his production of units if he can successfully take an enemy outpost for his own. Suddenly, there's no such thing as a lost cause any more…

"THE ELEMENTS THAT HELPED THE ORIGINAL KOHAN SUCCEED WHERE OTHERS FAILED LOOK SET TO BE INCLUDED IN THIS FOLLOW-UP"

RED NINJA: END OF HONOR



If the subtle approach doesn't work then Kurenai is more than capable of looking after herself. Those poor guards didn't stand a chance.

Stealth is needed if you want to pull off these single-hit kills, but they're worth it.

TRANJI TAKES GIRL POWER TO A NEW LEVEL

PS2 **Ninjas have had more than their fair share of games dedicated to them.** As far back as we can remember, there have been dark, masked figures bringing down the bad guys with a combination of martial arts skill and devastatingly effective equipment. We don't tire of them because they're the perfect videogame hero, which is why there will always be room for one more to squeeze in. As the name would suggest, *Red Ninja* is one of these welcomed titles.

Set in 16th Century Japan, you play Kurenai – a Kunoichi, or female ninja – who is hell-bent on avenging her father's murder by any means. Admittedly, this unoriginal plot is hardly inspiring, but with Japanese film writer/director Shinsuke Sato pulling the script's strings, things are looking a shade brighter and we can probably look forward to an old story being told very well.

From the outside this game is looking much like the rest of the pack, but after a brief play it unexpectedly starts to shine in certain areas. The most obvious example of this is the incredible number of ways in which you can use Kurenai's choice of weapon, the Tetsugen. This is basically a length of wire with a blade attachment at one end, and although this doesn't sound particularly threatening, it can glide through a guard's body like a warm knife through butter, and some impressive slicing fun is to be had from the word go. Add to this a tension gauge that determines how much damage you can do, not to mention multiple attachments that perform various tasks, and you've got yourself a handy little tool.

The Tetsugen can also be used in more imaginative ways. Hanging guards from overhead beams and then beating them like a human piñata is hugely satisfying, and other manoeuvres like tying groups together, nailing individuals to posts and pulling patrolling guards off cliffs are all possible. In fact, if you want a hack-and-slash *Ninja Gaiden* experience then it looks as if this will do the job nicely, but the option of stealth is also present.

Although Kurenai is more than capable of looking after herself, if you prefer to do things the sly way then you'll have a host of stealth actions at your disposal, including an amusing seduction move that sees you using your womanly wiles to lure enemies into your waiting blade. This optional change of pace looks set to work well, although the enemies we met in the early code were a little slow to say the least, so sneaking quietly by or ripping an unsuspecting throat open from behind all seemed a little too easy.

However, the multi-functional weapon is also our greatest fear. Throwing, pulling, swinging and dangling with a length of wire is all well and good, but this is a difficult thing to get right and if the physics aren't spot-on then it could easily turn into a mangled mess of clipping. The code we played was definitely struggling when performing some of the more complex moves and a wire that passes cleanly through a wooden hut while dragging an enemy along the ground isn't going to be overlooked. Thankfully, there's still plenty of time to iron out these flaws, so let's hope they're ironed out.

On the whole, this is looking pretty promising and if the entire game can live up to the standard of the small section that we've seen then this could be a very enjoyable title. Of course, things don't always work out like this and, if rushed, we fear that *End Of Honor* might just become another mediocre ninja game.

"HANGING GUARDS FROM OVERHEAD BEAMS AND THEN BEATING THEM LIKE A HUMAN PIÑATA IS HUGELY SATISFYING"

DETAILS

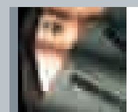
FORMAT: PS2, Xbox
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Sierra
DEVELOPER: Tranji
RELEASE: Q4 '04
GENRE: Action
PLAYERS: 1

Take control of Kurenai – a young female ninja – as she fights against an evil ninja clan and tries to avenge the death of her father.

LITTLE FRIENDS

For the most part, *Red Ninja* manages to stick firmly to realism. Tranji has obviously put a lot of effort into researching the era and has managed to make the game look and feel authentic. Of course, too much realism makes the young ninja a dull girl, so an air of fantasy and magic is also needed sometimes. In *Red Ninja* this comes in the form of Butterfly Guardians. Apparently, every female ninja has her own Butterfly to aid her in times of trouble, and although this may sound more than a little like Link's little fairy friend Navi, Kurenai's Butterfly isn't nearly as helpful. Rather than bringing points of interest to your attention and locating enemy weak spots, Butterflies merely point you in the right direction when the path ahead isn't as clear as it could be. Still, it's the thought that counts, eh?

RED NINJA: END OF HONOR
PLAYSTATION2/MULTIFORMAT



KUNOICHI PROFILE

The Kunoichi were female ninjas who lived in Japan during the 16th Century. The class mainly consisted of girls who had been abandoned by their families and been recruited and trained by one of the ninja groups. It's rumoured that Japanese lords would foster these ninjas and send them all over the land to gather information so they could reign successfully.

HISTORY

- **NIGHTSHADE** 2004 [PS2]
- **SAMURAI WARRIORS** 2004 [PS2]
- **TENCHU 2: BOTSA** 2000 [PSone]

It may not look much, but Kurenai's wire is pretty lethal if used correctly.

"RED NINJA: END OF HONOR WILL OFFER AUTHENTIC NINJA GAMEPLAY AND ACTION AROUND EVER CORNER"

PHILIP O'NEIL, SENIOR VP SALES AND MARKETING, VIVENDI UNIVERSAL

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

GIRLY NINJA ACTION

NINJA GAIDEN - DIFFICULTY + LAYDEE = RED NINJA

It looks like all the classic traps are going to make an appearance. Now where's that giant boulder…?

Kurenai's Tetsugen isn't just for violence. It'll also get you across large gaps or to the bottom of deep pits.

SHOWCASE

MORE THINGS TO WATCH FOR ON THE GAMING HORIZON

Championship Manager 5

EIDOS CLIPS ONE OFF THE BAR

Format: PC
Origin: UK
Publisher: Eidos
Developer: Beautiful Game Studios
Genre: Sports Sim
Players: 1



When Sports Interactive and Eidos went their separate ways last year, it threw up all kinds of questions about the fans' loyalty. Obviously, you'd expect those who played the previous *Champ Manager* games to be savvy enough to stick with the developer rather than the brand name, but now, with Eidos' continuation of the series nearing completion, it looks like it'll be a much closer call than we first thought. Offering what the publisher claims to be much more effective and user-friendly training sections, faster gameplay over previous instalments, an improved 2D engine, additional feedback on how matches progress and much more, it'll be interesting to see how this rivalry turns out when the fans decide.

RELEASE DATE: October '05

Donkey Konga 2: Hit Song Parade

IT'S ANOTHER BONGO BONANZA

Format: GameCube
Origin: Japan
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Namco
Genre: Rhythm Action
Players: 1-4



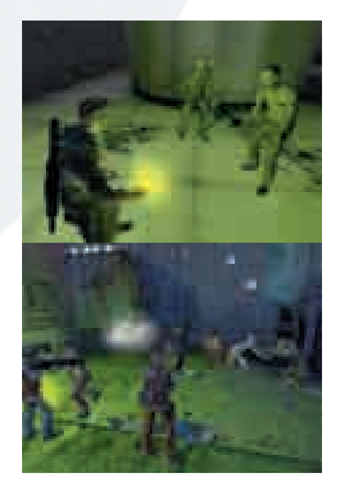
The first game isn't even out in the UK yet, but Namco's bongo-beating follow-up to the addictive *Donkey Konga* is already available to those with a taste for import games. While owners of the original may be slightly hesitant as to whether to invest in it or not, though, the truth is that this is more than just an add-on disc – plenty of polish has been applied to all aspects of the game, along with the inclusion of 32 new songs (some more catchy than others) and both some new and enhanced modes for multiplayer action. And, as you'd expect, that's where the heart of the fun is here; those with bongo-owning friends are in for a real treat, while everyone else waits for the PAL release…

RELEASE DATE: TBA (Japan: Out Now)

Dead Rush

SHUT UP AND DRIVE, ZOMBIE BOY

Format: PS2/Xbox/GameCube
Origin: US
Publisher: Activision
Developer: Treyarch
Genre: Action Adventure
Players: 1



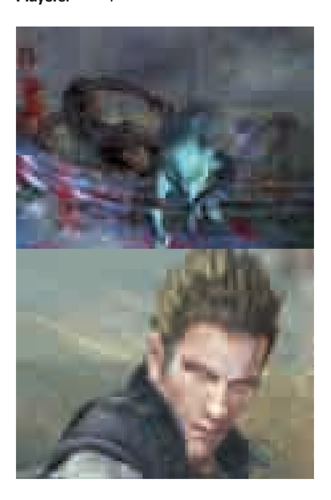
Is it bad that Activision's monster-slaying vehicular adventure brings to mind an unholy union between *Carmageddon* and *Resident Evil*? Perhaps. Still, in creating a game that mixes the concepts of driving cars and escaping from undead hordes, Treyarch has given itself the chance to do something different with the survival horror genre. The focus appears to be split between on-foot sections – repelling enemies with your flashlight, blowing their heads off, salvaging weaponry and saving any survivors – and vehicle-based gameplay, which essentially turns you into a moving weapon. How well it all hangs together remains to be seen but there's no reason why it shouldn't work… in theory, anyway.

RELEASE DATE: TBA '05

Altered Beast

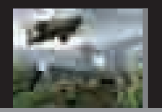
THE ISLAND OF DR MOREAU, ONLY NOT

Format: PlayStation2
Origin: Japan
Publisher: SEGA
Developer: WOW Entertainment
Genre: Action Adventure
Players: 1



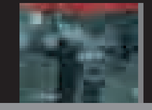
From its origins as a simple yet effective side-scrolling beat-'em-up to a free-roaming action adventure game, *Altered Beast* has come a long way. Whether that's a good thing, of course, is still open to debate. The plot, which sees you play a special military operative sent to investigate a 'genetic outbreak' in a small town, couldn't be further from the original premise if it tried, which leaves us wondering whether SEGA is simply trying to ride on the back of the name alone. Nevertheless, the ability to transform into various beasts – including a werewolf, a dragon and a minotaur – is available, although you can also modify your DNA to gain more skills. We only hope that SEGA can deliver with this one.

RELEASE DATE: Q1 '05



Delayed – BF: Modern Combat [Multi]

■ Having finally seen sense by adding a single-player mode to what was originally an online multiplayer-only game, EA has moved the console release of *Battlefield* back a whole year to late 2005.



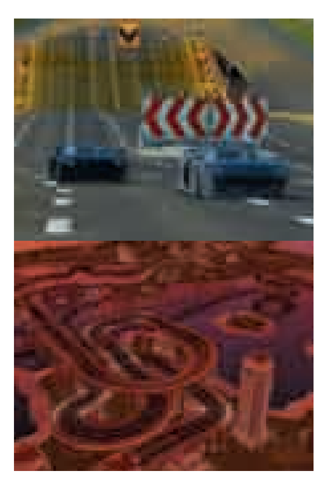
Delayed – Shellshock: Nam '67 [Multi]

■ With *Hitman: Contracts* failing to perform as well as expected, it's not surprising that Eidos has acknowledged the summer lull and pushed back its Guerrilla-developed Vietnam war-fest until the middle of September.

TrackMania Sunrise

THE SUN'LL COME OUTTOMORROW

Format: PC
Origin: France
Publisher: Digital Jesters
Developer: Nadeo
Genre: Racing
Players: 1 (1-30 Online)



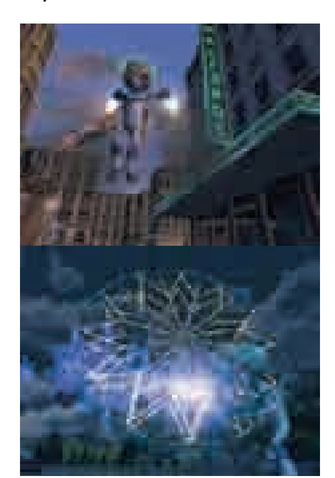
Despite sneaking under the radar of many PC gamers, *TrackMania* actually proved to be a competent online racer with a distinct feeling of Scalextric about it. Having now built up quite a fan base, then, it's only natural that the game's follow-up should build upon the principles of the original with the emphasis being firmly on having more of everything. From the improved driving physics and new environments to the additional single-player modes and new track segments from which to create your own courses (not to mention the ability to have 30 people all racing on the same track at once), we've got no doubt that this will prove a hit with current fans as well as attracting plenty of new ones.

RELEASE DATE: Q1 '05

Destroy All Humans

IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE

Format: PS2/Xbox
Origin: US
Publisher: THQ
Developer: Pandemic Studios
Genre: Action Adventure
Players: 1



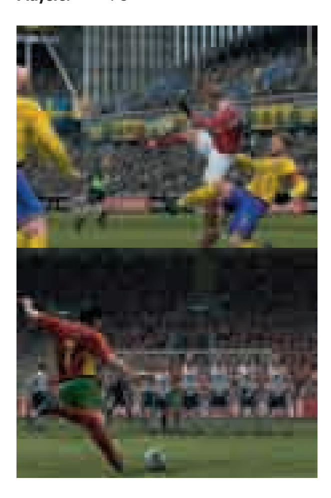
Role-reversal is becoming quite a fad at the moment – from *GoldenEye: Rogue Agent* and *Evil Genius* to *City Of Villains*, being the bad guy is something that every gamer enjoys. As such, we've already got high hopes for *Destroy All Humans*, Pandemic's Fifties-style romp that has you, as Crypto the alien, attempting to conquer the planet. How you go about doing that, however, is up to you; cunning players may choose a path of subversion and body-snatching that leads to the President's door, while the less patient will more likely turn to Crypto's dazzling array of weaponry and his death-dealing UFO. Either way, the potential seems great and we're already itching to get our hands on this.

RELEASE DATE: Q1 '05

Pro Evolution Soccer 4

FOUR LIONS ON A SHIRT

Format: PS2/Xbox/PC
Origin: Japan
Publisher: Konami
Developer: Konami TYO
Genre: Sports
Players: 1-8





Xbox fans, rejoice – the one sports game you've all wanted is finally coming to your console. *Pro Evolution Soccer 4* offers a handful of improvements over the last game rather than out-and-out innovation – a new dribbling system to enhance player control, additional free kick and penalty kick techniques, improved player detail and so on – although the inclusion of an on-screen referee for the first time in the series' history (to go with the advanced referee AI) should at least whet your appetite. Annoyingly, Konami's refusal to confirm or deny online play for either platform leaves us expecting the worst – especially if EA's new partnership with Live delivers the goods as promised…

RELEASE DATE: October '04

Bet On Soldier

BIG MONEY, BIG PRIZES

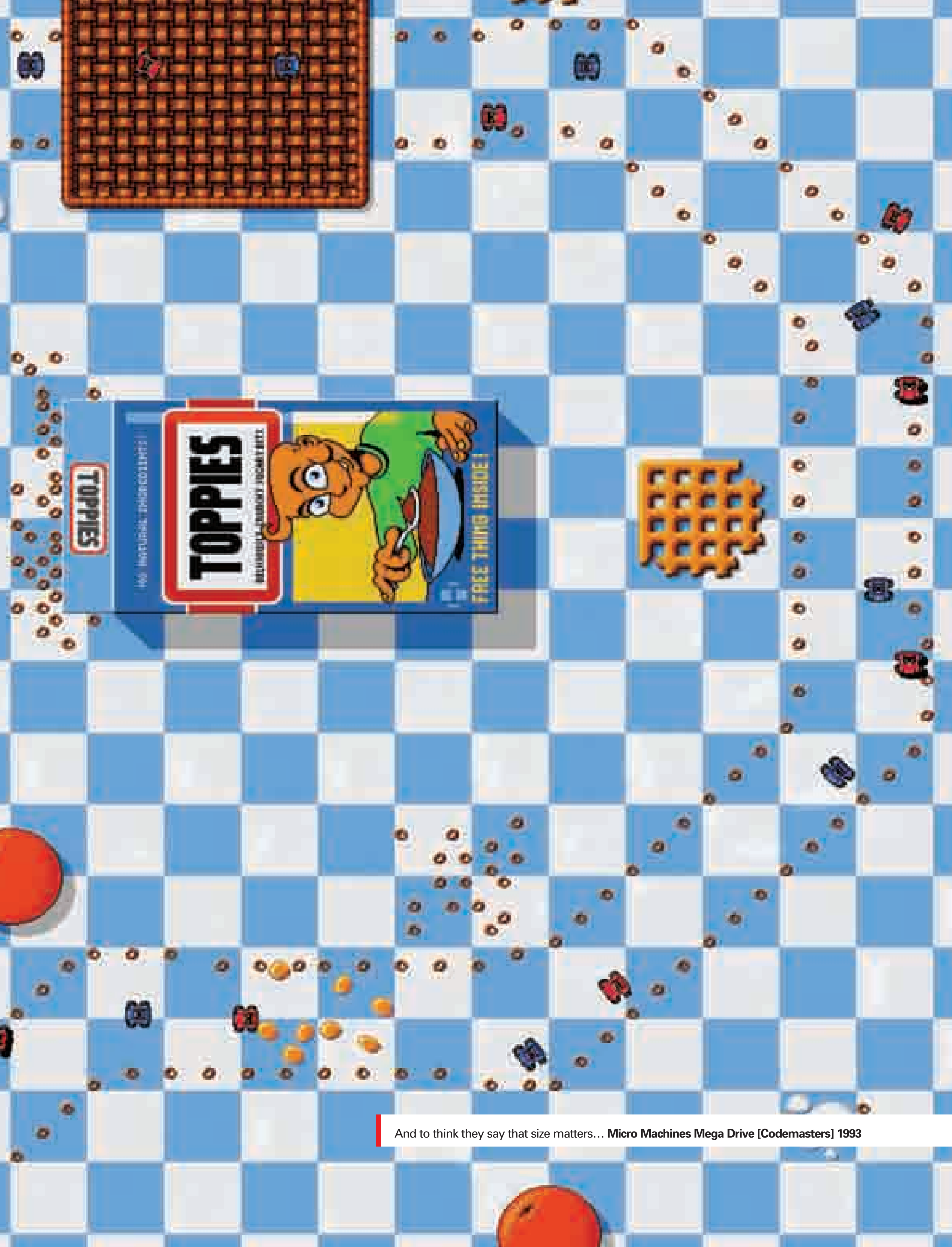
Format: PC
Origin: France
Publisher: Digital Jesters
Developer: Kylotonn
Genre: FPS
Players: 1 (1-32 Online)



With FPS games becoming much of a muchness at the moment, it's not surprising that developers are turning to gimmicky ideas to try to spice things up a bit. In the case of *Bet On Soldier*, that gimmick is the ability to place bets on the outcome of various battles as you plough through each stage; specific 'boss' enemies offer huge earning opportunities if you can slaughter them (in a *Running Man*-style broadcast of a one-on-one fight, no less), with the spoils making more powerful weapons and armour available. In practice, it does makes things more exciting, and despite being nearly a year off, *Bet On Soldier* already looks rather impressive. Hopefully, it'll just get better from here on in.

RELEASE DATE: April '05





And to think they say that size matters… **Micro Machines Mega Drive [Codemasters] 1993**





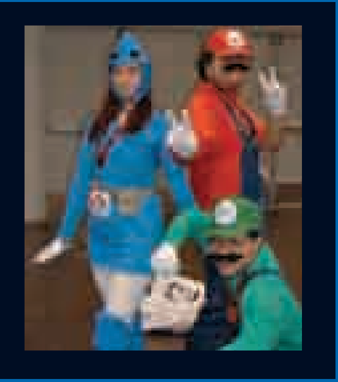
50 THINGS TO DO IN GAMING BEFORE YOU'RE DEAD

THE GAMING LIFESTYLE OFFERS A RICH, DIVERSE AND CONTROVERSIAL WEALTH OF EXPERIENCES, IF YOU JUST CHOOSE TO REACH OUT AND GRAB THEM. OUR DEFINITIVE LIST OF THE 50 THINGS IN GAMING YOU MUST DO BEFORE YOU BUY THE FARM WILL ENSURE YOUR GAMING LIFE WILL HAVE BEEN LIVED TO THE FULL

Take a look at the dictionary definition of a videogame. 'Videogame. *Noun.* An electronic or computerised game played by manipulating images on a video display or television screen.' As is the nature of dictionaries, the definition's very dry. We, as gamers, know what games really are. They're extensions of ourselves. They consume much of our leisure time, and much of our conversation. We also know that games can be dangerous, and can encourage us to slide towards becoming what the Japanese call 'otaku' (Otaku. *Noun. Derogatory slang.* An avid collector or enthusiast, particularly one obsessed with anime, videogames or computers who rarely leaves home). However, we're here to ensure that we can enjoy our computerised games without fear of becoming recluses or bores. This list of 50 things you *have* to do in gaming before you're dead will make sure you never think about manipulating images on a video display in the same way again. Really, you won't.

50 EXPERIMENT WITH COSPLAY

Cosplay ('costume playing') was once considered a practice unique to Japanese youths, but the crazy dress-up hobby is taking over the world. Japanese student Kyoko, 19, suggests that "you would be more respected in a contest if you make a costume from scratch, and also if you try to feel the same emotions as your character." Therefore, if you intend to make a costume based on a Nintendo character, be prepared to have a sore face from pretending you're impossibly happy all the time.



49 PULL AN 'ALL-NIGHT SESH'

The All-Night Sesh is a thing of legend. Many gamers say they've experienced one, but very few actually have. It is an act common to players of *Championship Manager*, but not so common to the rest of the gaming fraternity. It's simple, though – buy yourself a multi-pack of Frisps, a big bottle of Coke, order a curry and challenge yourself to go all night on a game of your choice.



48 BRING HOME THE ARCADES

Every true gamer has dreamed of it, so why not do it? Buy an arcade machine of your own. "Find an old arcade, probably run by criminals as a front to ship parts of dead bodies off the continent, and demand that they sell you a ridiculously niche arcade game," suggests games tester and mecha-nut Ollie Barder. "Upon installation in your abode, rope in some friends and assure them that it's going to a ground-floor room, when it's actually meant for a fifth-floor cupboard. Make sure you do no work, but make helpful comments as your friends contort their bodies to serve your maniacal whims, and then let the hardware settle. Once accomplished, you will have a family heirloom that only a line of genetically encoded geeks could truly appreciate."

47 PUBLICLY HUMILIATE A CHILD ON A DANCING STAGE MACHINE

As good as kids might be on the easy setting of *Cotton-Eye Joe*, they just can't keep up with *Tsugaru* on Difficult. Try it. Try it until they cry.

46 DO THE BIG HYPE FLIP-FLOP

This is one you've probably done already. Before a heavily promoted game is even released, hail it as the greatest game ever made. Then when it is released, play it for 15 minutes on a demo disc and declare it the worst game ever made. This manoeuvre causes no end of hilarity in pubs and on internet message boards.

45 QUEUE LIKE THOSE OTHER GUYS DO

You've seen it on TV and in the magazines. On particular launch days, in Japan, people have been known to sleep out all night in front of shops to ensure they are at the front of the queue for a big release. Why not put an interesting spin on it, and sleep out all night in order to be first through the door to demand a refund for *Driv3r*?



44 PESTER HIDEO KOJIMA BY EMAIL

A genius like Hideo Kojima should be emailed at least once by every gamer on the face of the Earth. We did it and asked him to contribute to this very feature. His right-hand man, Scott Dolph, star of *MGS2*, had this to say: "Hi, We are currently turning down all interviews and requests to answer questions directed to Hideo Kojima so that he can focus on finishing up *MGS3*. Thank you for your understanding. Scott." See? Works a treat.

43 PESTER SCOTT DOLPH BY EMAIL

Hideo Kojima is such a genius that we think that even Scott Dolph should be emailed by every gamer on the Earth. So we emailed him back and asked him if he'd like to contribute to this very feature. He had this to say: "I think I'm going to pass on this one." Result.

42 PLAY ONLY GAME MUSIC AT YOUR WEDDING

If you're a romantic, you just have to follow the example set by Paul Gilmorr of Minneapolis, who set his entire wedding to the soundtracks from videogames. "My wife came down the aisle to a medley of themes from *Shenmue*," said Paul, "and our first dance was to the 'Prelude' from *Final Fantasy VII*." Bless.

41 CHAMPION A DOOMED CONSOLE

If you haven't done this already, you've encountered your first dreadful omission from your gaming lifestyle. Take advantage of the approaching next-generation releases and attach yourself to the current machine that's most likely to fail. It's important that you go down with the sinking ship when the inevitable happens, and shout about all the great games while drowning in a sea of mediocre software.



40 CHANGE CAREER – GET INTO GAMES

Legendary porn actress Ginger Lynn made 69 adult movies in a two-year period from the age of 21. Still, with all that success, her dream was to make a splash in mainstream entertainment. This dream took her to the lofty heights of videogame cut-scene performance. Her role as Chief Technician Rachel Coriolis in *Wing Commander III* should serve as an inspiration to everyone who dreams of a career in games – thus, we suggest that you quit your job today and start reaching for the stars.



39 SPEND AN ENTIRE NIGHT JUST LOADING…

Dig out your Spectrum and a load of old tapes, and have an old-school night. Invite some friends and you can all participate in some loading joy. Remember, though, don't play any games – just try to load them.

36 USE A MOVE FROM A BEAT-'EM-UP IN A REAL FIGHT

There's no better way to prove you're a gamer to the core than to call upon your gaming knowledge in a time of crisis. If you find yourself in a brawl on a Saturday night at your local, why not bust out a Spinning Bird Kick to win the fight and earn the respect of your peers?

34 WAGGLE A ZIPSTICK

Ah, yes. The simple pleasures. We're aware that there are many gamers who have only ever held a joypad and never experienced the bliss of the clickety-click from a lovely ZipStick. Even if you have nothing to plug one into, find one somewhere, take it to bed and clack yourself to sleep.

"WE SUGGEST THAT YOU QUIT YOUR JOB TODAY AND START REACHING FOR THE STARS"

38 DIG UP THE E.T. CARTRIDGES

We've all heard (so often) about those *E.T.* cartridges buried in the desert, the infamous remnants of the early Eighties games industry crash. Digging them all up might not seem like a gaming 'must', but there's a reason for this one…

37 BURY COPIES OF DRIV3R IN THE DESERT

A pleasurable act, and a charitable one. Use the hole left over by the *E.T.* exhumation to dispose of another atrocity.

35 TELL A PIRATE THAT HE'S WRONG

And by that, we mean someone who copies software, not a thief of the sea (though you may choose to do that in your own time). The Barras Market in Glasgow is home to many software pirates, so we sent a representative to have a word with one of these traders, to tell them that they are destroying the games industry. "We're not destroying the games industry," said a trader we'll call 'John'. "We're providing a service that keeps people buying consoles. The only machine we've had real problems doing copies for is the GameCube, and look how well that rubbish is doing."

33 COMPLETE A JAPANESE RPG WHILE UNDERSTANDING NONE OF THE STORY

Yet another essential experience to truly earn a L33T gaming badge of honour, with respect earned being directly proportionate to its complexity. Bonus points are awarded for a variety of things – for instance, if you can't even understand the name of the game. Have those hankies at the ready for the tear-jerking ending when the little man with the brown hair has a long conversation with a little woman with yellow hair under a tree, while a thing that may be a fox (or a cat, you can't be sure) jumps about in the background screaming some crazy symbols.

32 TALK GAMES WITH TRIP

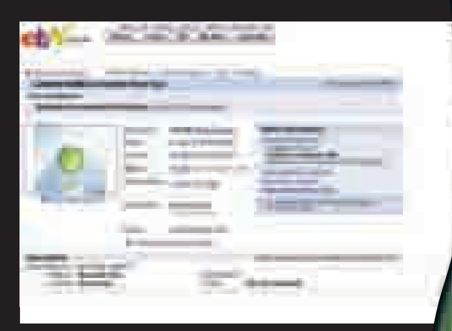
Trip Hawkins, videogame pioneer and visionary, is the man to talk to when it comes to essential gaming experiences. “Get a group of friends together to play *M.U.L.E.* on the Atari 800 with four joysticks, or *Twisted!* on the old 3DO player. These are two four-player games that, despite their respective vintages of 1983 and 1993, are still more fun to play than any other games ever made,” he says. “I make this claim because most of the so-called ‘great’ games cannot be played by most people because [they] are too hardcore and too difficult. This problem would even apply to *M.U.L.E.* to some degree, but since it’s *M.U.L.E.*, I don’t care; it gets an exemption. These games are the epitome of ‘fun for everyone’ and they define a social payoff from gaming that is sadly absent from most of the history of videogames.” Trip makes no apologies for his choice of games: “Perhaps some of my feelings about this are pride of authorship. I had the core idea for both of these products and commissioned and produced them, in addition to contributing many of the key design ideas. Both were years ahead of their time and still are, even though you can hardly find working units of the hardware they ran on.”

31 HARNESS THE HEALING POWER OF GAMES

As if more proof was needed that the dictionary definition of videogames doesn’t cut it, cult TV legend Nigel Buckland of *Vids* fame tells how games can heal: “Being vaguely of the Attention Deficit Disorderly inclination, I’ve found that gaming actually curbs my ADD. This of course runs contrary to current theories expounded by critics of computer games. My attention span is forced to comply with my stubborn desire to complete the game, hence I’ve found my short-term memory improving through the gaming experience. Gaming has taught me patience and that rarest of life’s gifts – the ability to defer pleasure. Philosophical introspection and cultural insight engendered through games. Not bad for *GTA*, eh?”



30 SELL AN EMPTY BOX ON EBAY



The eBay listing read ‘Limited Edition Crystal Xbox box’. Some sucker bought it for £115 and then wasn’t very happy to find themselves with nothing but an empty box. “Basically, I put it up to prove to my friend you can sell anything on eBay, and worded it jokingly to prove that people don’t read auctions,” says Lee Ogden, the seller. “Three days later, after the box had just been posted, I got an abusive email saying the buyer was going to take action, but I also had another email from eBay saying what I did was fine, so I left it and kept the cash.” So, we think we should all get in on this neat money-making idea. It’s surely an essential (and lucrative) experience. “There were about 15 more listings after mine ended by other people, who had literally copied and pasted my auction,” Lee laughs. What a fine, upstanding example of a man.

29 MAKE YOUR OWN GAME

There are a few ways you can do this. *RPG Maker 2000* on the PC is a popular choice, but we have a soft spot for *RPG Maker* on the PlayStation. Regardless of which tools you use, you’ll no doubt get about as far as we did – two screens with sprites who don’t animate properly, all of them swearing at each other.

28 THROW OUT YOUR GAME COLLECTION

Veteran gamers will always be more passionate about their hobby than the new kids. Why is this? It’s because all veteran gamers will remember throwing out games or machines they once loved. You have to lose it to know what it means to have it. So, we suggest that you grab half of your collection and burn it tonight. You’ll thank us for it later.



27 DON’T VISIT E3

There are few greater joys in gaming than not having to go to E3. You can thrill at not having to sit and watch with gritted teeth as respected developers jump through hoops and make a fool of themselves just to sell their games. You’ll surely enjoy not having to stand there while a booth babe pretends to want to be photographed with you. Also, let’s not forget the added bonus of not having to suffer the days-old sweat of American games journalists in barely air-conditioned rooms.

26 GET A PROFESSIONAL’S OPINION OF YOUR HOBBY

“I think game-playing is healthy enough as long as the games are suitable,” says Annette Stewart, a teacher. “I just feel that young kids shouldn’t be playing violent games. Apart from that, on you go.”

25 ACHIEVE VICTORY BY WAY OF THE FREAK GLITCH

Beating a friend at a game is always a pleasure, but beating a friend at a game through some freak occurrence is gaming at its most joyous. *SEGA Worldwide Soccer* is a good one for this. Shooting miles wide and not bulging the net is the greatest 1-0 victory a person can enjoy.

24 PULL A YOJIMBO

The act of ‘pulling a Yojimbo’ gets its name from the classic Akira Kurosawa movie *Yojimbo*, and the ronin within who plays two criminal gangs against each other. In a gaming context, a Yojimbo is pulled on the high street, where you can play rival game shops against each other to your own benefit. Buy a game cheap at one shop, and trade it for something of higher value at another. Challenge one to match the other’s prices. If you’re really dishonourable, there’s all sorts of nasty tricks you can play upon these cut-throats. There’s no need to bring a samurai sword to make your point, though.

23 UNPLAY A GAME

You know you’re a true gamer when you turn on a game with no intention of playing it. Go on… load up *Vice City*, park your car on the beach and just listen to some Hall & Oates.

22 CHALLENGE SOME SKATER PUNKS

Enhance your image as a sick-in-the-head gamer by approaching skateboarders in the street and telling them you'll give them a tenner if they can collect the letters 'S-K-A-T-E' in less than two minutes. When they stare blankly at you, edge silently away.

21 DO THE CAR-BOOT BUMP

"It's a fiver for this Game Gear thing," said the man. The 'Game Gear thing' in question was a rather rare SEGA Nomad. Bargain.

18 MASTER THE ONE-HAND PEEL

A true art form, the one-hand peel allows a gamer to get the shrinkwrap from a game while manipulating heavy machinery or driving with the other hand. This talent should be used in conjunction with the one-hand manual flick-through for maximum new-purchase perusal.

17 VISIT ELECTRIC TOWN

Yes, make a trip to Japan and enjoy the sights and sounds of Akihabara. It's geek heaven, with shops selling all the things a gamer has ever dreamt of.

15 DRIVE YOUR MOST HATED FOOTBALL TEAM INTO THE GUTTER

Championship Manager may have been invented for this very reason. Take control of the football team you detest most (let's use Arsenal as an example) and destroy them – release all the quality players on free transfers, and sign 40-year-olds from the lower leagues to take their place. Sit back and enjoy.

14 WRITE ADULT FAN-FICTION FEATURING NINTENDO CHARACTERS

Fan-fiction writing. Some see it as the ultimate tribute to beloved characters, some see it as parasitic copyright infringement. Regardless, if you're a gamer, you have to put pen to paper at least once. Can you match the works of artistry that can be found on your local internet? "'There is nothing that you can do, Link,' he panted as he took Link's lips again. 'I can do whatever I want to do. And if I have to break you, I will. Succumb to me and enter the dark side… no one is entirely heterosexual anyway…'." This extract is from the *Legend Of Zelda* fan-fiction 'Error' by Vianca Gonzales. "For 'Error'," he says, "my inspiration was weaved through a lot of events that happened to me. I had a dream that young Link got 101 spiders and was suddenly hurled into another world. It was Hyrule but seven years in the future, and I was stuck as young Link. The Master Sword was not in the Temple of Time and there were not working weapons. When I woke up, I saw that as a nightmare. To be stuck as a child in the future where you would not use any weapons, including the ones you could use, and having no hope in returning…" Hmm. Quite.

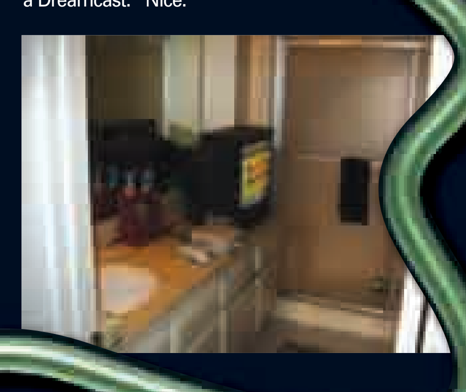
20 PRETEND TO BE A GIRL ON XBOX LIVE

If you have the kit, it's just something that has to be done. However, we're not too proud of what we did, so the Gamertag of the poor guy involved has been omitted.

games™: Hi. What's the best car here?
Londoner: Your car's too slow. Grab a Ferrari.
games™: It's my boyfriend's game. I don't know what I'm doing. He's gone out again. I'm sick of him.
Londoner: Your car's too slow. I'll lap you.
games™: Where do you live? I want to teach him a lesson.
Londoner: Teach who a lesson?
games™: I want to teach my boyfriend a lesson. You want to hook up? I'm 19.
Londoner: I'm in London.
games™: Cool. Me too. You want to hook up? I'm 19. I can come to your place. My boyfriend's out clubbing.
Londoner: What do you mean?
games™: You got a girlfriend?
Londoner: (Pause) No.
games™: You want me to come over? I've got a motorcycle. You want to get nasty everywhere?
Londoner: [Pause] I'm hosting. I've got friends joining later.
games™: We can both play at your place. After we're done getting nasty everywhere.
Londoner: [Pause] You live in London?
games™: Mm-hm. And I want your downloadable content.
(At this point, we laughed and got booted from the session. Dang.)

19 TAKE GAMING ON THE TOILET TO A NEW LEVEL

Why settle for a handheld while you're on the job? Jon Lenaway, co-founder of the American gaming PR company Step 3, has a far better set-up. "I've got two bathrooms, and we only use the one to shower… so this extra one has a Dreamcast." Nice.



"BEATING A FRIEND AT A GAME IS ALWAYS A PLEASURE"

16 BLAME VIDEOGAMES FOR YOUR CRIMES

With the worryingly regularity of litigation against game developers these days, there's no better time to commit the perfect crime. While we'd never suggest that our readers break the law, we would like to remind you that your habit of stealing mint Aeros from the local newsagent probably has more to do with the influence of Cloud Strife's burglaries than anything defective in your character. And you can quote us in a court of law.

13 ROLE PLAY GAME CHARACTERS IN THE BEDROOM

We reckon a girlfriend works really well as Mai from *King Of Fighters*. A boyfriend works great as Optimus Prime from *Transformers*.

12 RUN THE G-CON GAUNTLET

On a Saturday night in the city centre, run around the streets waving a G-Con in the air. See how long it takes for you to be arrested.

11 USE A GAMING CHAT-UP LINE

If there's one thing we know about, it's how to pick up girls. And this one never fails: "I must be in another castle, because you're a princess."



6 PERFORM A GAME SHOP RESCUE

If you like feeling good about yourself, make every attempt to carry out this entry on the list. If you have the patience to wait around, a visit to a game shop will always feature a parent trying to find a game for their child. Stop that parent from buying whatever he or she chooses – it is guaranteed to be awful. Present them with your own choice of quality game and you are almost guaranteed your wings when you get to heaven. Unless you like rubbish games about cars that fight.



4 PARTICIPATE IN AN MMORPG EVENT

Let's face it – MMORPGs can, at times, be very dull. Your first month on any of these games will probably be spent being chased by a rabbit. That's why you have to join a Guild as soon as possible and tag along when an 'event' happens. In *EverQuest*, not so long ago, Guilds united to destroy a god-like creature called Kerafyrm. You could, and should, have been there, getting in the way.

"I GOT UP THIS MORNING AND LOOKED OUT THE WINDOW AT THE TREES AND THOUGHT 'GREAT GRAPHICS'..."

10 SEND AN ANIMAL CROSSING LETTER TO DOWNING STREET

Show support for your leader and your country in the only way a gamer knows how. "Dear Tony, I like you a lot. You are very nice. I hope you like this orange. Goodbye."



9 LEARN TO PLAY THE OCARINA

It only takes about three hours to perfect the *EastEnders* theme. You have no excuse not to.



8 BE WHOLLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEATHS OF MANY

There are a few multiplayer games that offer you the chance to take the ultimate ego-trip and be responsible for the deaths of many, but none are as satisfying as *Tribes 2*. Let someone ask for an experienced pilot, and offer your services. Then crash your entire team into a hillside. Sure, it's low, but it's fun.



3 MAKE AN INCREDIBLY UNORIGINAL COMMENT ABOUT GAMING

If you die before you've done this, you haven't truly lived as a gamer. There are many examples of unoriginal gamer-speak, but there's surely none better than – "I've been playing games so much recently that I got up this morning and looked out the window at the trees and thought 'great graphics…'."



5 THROW BARRELS AT A PLUMBER

While we understand that the services of a plumber can be quite expensive these days, there's surely no better anecdote down the pub than the time you rang a plumber round, then welcomed him to your door by hitting him with a barrel.



2 BE MOVED TO TEARS BY A PIECE OF GAME MUSIC

It's possible. We recommend Phil Bak's incredible acoustic-tinged remix of Rob Hubbard's '*Monty On The Run* High-Score Table' theme. You can find more details of this, and other heartbreakers, at www.remix64.com.



7 PITCH A VIDEOGAMES TV SHOW TO THE BBC

You want gaming on TV? Then do it yourself. We went to the BBC and pitched this idea – 'Two overweight, middle-aged men who know loads about games sit in a room and play games, and also talk about games with other people who play games and make games.' BBC producer Lucy Bacon asked us: "Why would we want to watch something like this? What's interesting about watching someone play a game? The thing about games is that we want to participate. We want to have a go." Is there a reluctance to commission gaming TV then? "There's no reluctance. It's just a case of finding a way to put it on TV. Interactivity is booming right now – the little red button is becoming very common, so perhaps in five to ten years there might be an interesting new way to approach a format."





1 ACTUALLY FINISH A GAME

It's a sad fact that although many people call themselves gamers, few have actually completed a game. It seems that many gamers today are becoming dabblers, merely dipping their toe in the ocean of gaming. Ensure that you 'achieve closure' by completing at least one game before your time on this Earth is at its end. Just don't make that game *Deus Ex: Invisible War* – the ending's terrible.





Sudeki is what happens when East and West embark on an RPG adventure together. But will there be tears before bedtime?

Sudeki 106

REVIEWS

THE AVERAGE

Despite representing an industry in which high scores mean everything, **games™** is not a magazine that marks with the majority. A lot of people think that anything below 7 (7.0, 70%, whatever) is a bad score – we don't. Going on a scale of one to ten, five is the average – average being a game that does what it sets out to do without attempting to do it better than anyone else. If a game gets five you'll get some enjoyment out of it but nothing more, simple as that. What's more, we won't be swayed by PR people telling us what a game's like – we only decide once we've played each game to death and, in the majority of cases, to completion. If a game's bad we'll make sure you know, if it's great we'll sing its praises. At the end of the day, we're just here to help you decide what's worth your hard-earned cash. After all, if it wasn't for you, we'd be out of a job.





DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
Xbox

ORIGIN
Sweden

PUBLISHER
Vivendi

DEVELOPER
Starbreeze

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1

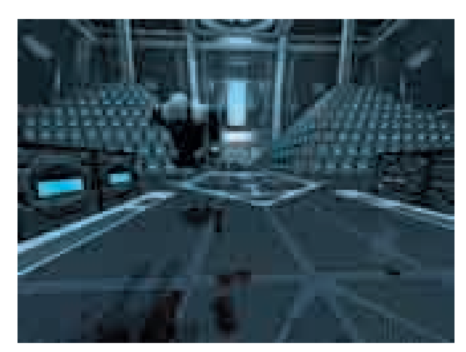
THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: ESCAPE FROM BUTCHER BAY

FANCY A QUICK GAME OF 'MURDER IN THE DARK'?

Is this the future for licensed games? All too often, a developer or publisher signs up a familiar IP based on a particular narrative and finds itself creatively constrained in terms of what can be done in the game. Even all-new titles based purely in the universe of the licence often lose the appeal of those more well-known events and characters. With today's technology, a better option is one that has only recently become available to developers. The *Animatrix* films went some way to explaining the back story of a blockbuster movie trilogy through a different medium, so there's no reason why this scenario can't be repeated with a videogame filling the blanks. Enter *Escape From Butcher Bay*, a playable prequel to the movie *Pitch Black* and the new chapter in a series that will fully embrace its multimedia nature with the imminent release of animated short *Dark Fury*. Try telling us this isn't the way forward while we go back to snapping unsuspecting necks…

Playing *Riddick* is like enjoying a montage of some of the best moments in the FPS genre. Knowing nods to *Halo*, *Half-Life*, *Red Faction II* and *Deus Ex* are balanced out with a healthy amount of inventive and original sections that are easily of comparable quality. The close combat is one such unique gem, and while *Breakdown* recently attempted a similar system, the weight and connection here help to surpass every other attempt at a first-person brawler. From the wonderfully worked counter system (a timed attack is often enough to take down an armed foe in a single blow, even turning their own gun against them in a shower of grey matter) to watching your opponent get bloodied and bruised as you clobber him, the pure satisfaction gleaned from a hand-to-hand victory will see you holstering your weapon just to land a glorious sucker punch one more time.

The photo-perfect Vin Diesel is only the entrée to *Riddick*'s visual smorgasbord – aside from the odd patch of slowdown this is easily up there



The locations not only look great but create a real sense of atmosphere.



A smack to the chops is just as satisfying as a death-dealing gun.

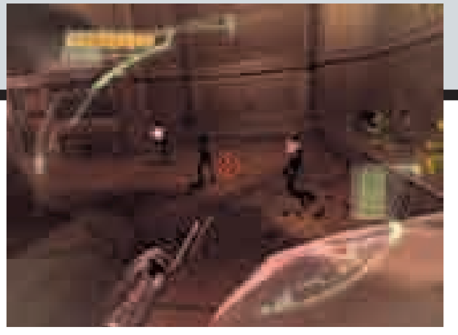


FAQs

Q. ANY UNLOCKABLES?
Every cigarette packet you find scattered about the game grants a piece of concept art or a similar reward.

Q. HOW LONG IS IT?
Depending on how many of the side missions you take on, probably between six and ten hours.

Q. NO MULTIPLAYER?
While it might have been a nice finishing touch, implementation would have been tough. And at the end of the day, no multiplayer is better than bad multiplayer.



Hand over your DNA sample and mess-making weapons will be yours.



Don't be scared by the film connection, *Enter The Matrix* this ain't.



The digital Vin Diesel looks fantastic, and has also had the good sense not to star in either *The Fast And The Furious* or *xXx*. Smart guy.

games™ FINGERPRINT

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

SHINY: *Riddick* showcases some of the finest visuals of this generation…

FISTICUFFS: … as well as a stunning re-creation of hand-to-hand combat.

with the best-looking console games of this generation. Stunning lighting and characters are offset with some lovely effects such as those that simulate Riddick's shining eyes, a great take on the much-abused staple of night vision. As if the tooth-rotting levels of eye candy weren't enough, the soundtrack proves to be equally impressive. Diesel provides his character's voice in a suitably dark, sub-bass manner (not to mention his arsenal of Schwarzenegger-esque insults and retorts) while performances from the likes of Xzibit and Dwight Schultz further the game's cinematic edge.

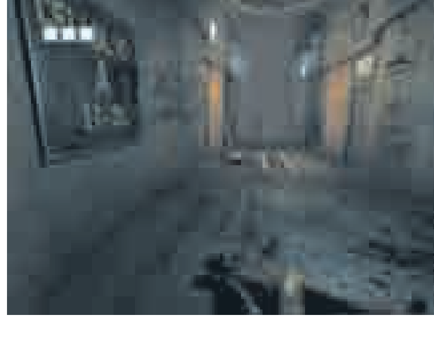
But arguably where *Escape From Butcher Bay* succeeds best is in its gritty and believable atmosphere. The forced prison walk-in as the opening credits roll (which is strangely reminiscent of Gordon Freeman's fateful journey to work) sets the tone perfectly and the edgy dialogue, graphic violence and daubed obscenities never feel tacked on purely for impact as is so often the case. Like all the best games, the big thrills come not from cut-scenes or scripted events but from general play. Forcing a guard's own gun to betray him, landing a crushing blow on the face of an inmate, and figuring out how to take down a mech suit twice your size are just a selection of the grizzly thrills that never fail to impress. That said, the game does a tremendous job of making you feel terrible about your violent outbursts – how many other games make you cringe or look away after a particularly brutal finish? On a less macabre note, there's a remarkable feeling of freedom; remarkable in the sense that aside from a few alternative ways of fulfilling a task, much of the game follows a rather rigid path.

Chronicles Of Riddick has no right to be this good. For a start, it's a film licence (although, admittedly, an indirect one) which is always a good way to make seasoned gamers think twice before opening their wallets. Then there's the double header of publisher and developer; Starbreeze has shown potential but never fully capitalised on it while publisher Vivendi hasn't had a truly great game since *Half-Life* (although we will say that this looks to be the start of an epic turnaround on its part). The odd glitch here and there, the modest length and some elongated loading times all conspire to hamper your enjoyment of the adventure, but with all its twists and turns – yes, even the plot is fairly well handled, offering several moments of bona fide genius – it's hard to come to any other conclusion than this: *Butcher Bay* is Vin Diesel's finest hour and sets a new benchmark for not only visuals but licensed games in general. And we never thought we'd hear ourselves saying that.

NOW YOU SEE ME…

Similar to *Splinter Cell*'s system of hiding in the shadows, darkness proves to be Riddick's only ally for much of the game. Crouch in a poorly lit area and your vision will take on a blue tint to let you know you're as good as invisible, so taking out lights will give you more chances to use this advantage. Unfortunately, guards display an impressive commitment to their employer and will search areas thoroughly if they see or hear you, often ruining your shadowy fun with their flashlights. Luckily, stealth is as good a weapon as it is a precautionary measure, so if you manage to sneak up on someone there's a range of suitably brutal stealth kills for you to enjoy. And you don't even need to waste time holding a button for ages…



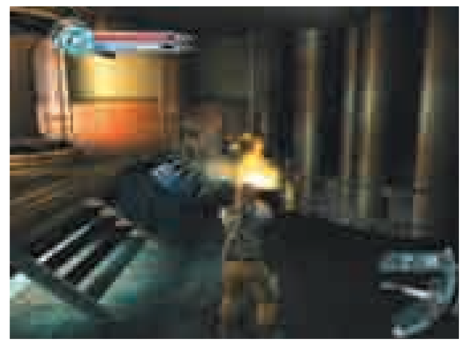


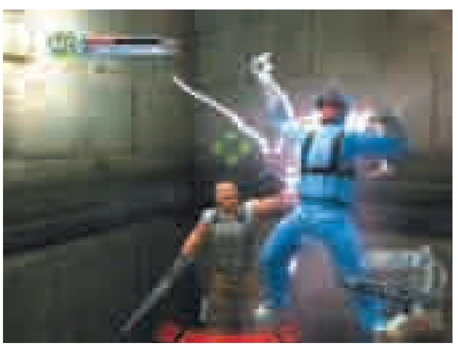






"So if I float that explosive barrel over there and shoot it… whoa. Awesome."





PSI-OPS: THE



As soon as you release the L1 button, that guy's day is going to be completely ruined.



Once you get used to the game mechanics, you can chuck items around while running and shooting elsewhere.

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
Xbox (US)

OTHER FORMATS
PlayStation2

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Midway

DEVELOPER
In-House

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
September '04
(US: Out Now)

PLAYERS
1

GALERIANS ASH



BETTER THAN

WORST THAN

METROID PRIME

Midway is awesome. You love Midway. You need to buy every Midway game on principle. In fact, you should just send Midway all your money right away. *Psi-Ops* is the new *Half-Life 2*. You want it. You demand it. You crave it. You… damn it. Just going to have to leave this useless booze-addled host before I can even smash his stupid face through his monitor…

Where were we? Oh yeah. Not many games can boast the ability to put the player into a trance-like state (especially several hours after playing it – very odd indeed), but *Psi-Ops* would appear to be one of them. It's a game that brings out the worst in people. Sit even the quietest person in the world down with it for a few minutes and it isn't long before the guilty pleasure kicks in; similarly, hand the controller to a total head case and you can expect to see the more gruesome side of the game. This freedom extends further still, offering fair opportunities to both stealthy and trigger-happy players without ever really forcing you into one category or the other. Then, of course, there's the real toy – the physics engine.

Such is the extent of the fusing of physics and game that it's hard to establish where one ends and the other begins. Riding a controlled item (or TK-Surfing, as it's known) was, on the developers' own admission, not originally an intended feature of the game, rather an amusing and sometimes useful by-product of the superb Havok 2 engine. Many games such as *Max Payne 2* and *Painkiller* benefit from more realistic physics routines – even if they do sometimes feel like they're played up for the audience – but we'd have to go out on a limb



Enemy soldier sucked your health bar dry? Punt him into the afterlife by way of revenge.

FLING WHEN YOU'RE WINNING

Telekinesis may be the first of your powers that's reawakened but it's also by far the most versatile. Be it chucking guards around, building routes into new areas, throwing debris into a firefight or drifting through the sky on a brain-powered plank, there is virtually no end to the enjoyment that can be had with this one ability. It's especially empowering to hear several guards overdose on confusion as a red barrel of volatile liquid drifts towards them – this banter is then easily ended with a single well-placed bullet and a blast of flaming doom. Once you get a taste for TK (as it becomes known), you'll find yourself endlessly throwing enemies into walls and catching them as they bounce off, and returning stray grenades to their rightful owners. Even if your interest in the game were to start waning, this power alone is enough to keep you playing.

MINDGATE CONSPIRACY

LOOKS LIKE MIDWAY SAW SECOND SIGHT COMING…

and proclaim *Psi-Ops* the finest merger of adventure and physics to date. This really is one of those great games where you're constantly thinking 'I wonder if I could do that…' only to discover that in most instances (and usually with a huge grin filling the majority of your face), you probably can. So it's all about the physics, then? Not at all.

Psi-Ops is an incredibly clever game. Many situations you'll find yourself in can be tackled quickly and easily with your most basic powers, but by tempting the player with a crane arm to swing around, a giant boulder to roll down a hallway or a gruesome device into which guards can be flung, the game can often seem tougher than it really is. Indeed, the player is offered opportunities galore that shame even the grizzly *Manhunt*, the difference being that here, planning and skill are required as opposed to simply holding down a button for a bit. But it's this freedom to tackle a room, a building or a whole level that means *Psi-Ops* is only as sadistic as the person holding the controller; with so many potential courses of action, scope for replaying favourite areas or, in fact, the entire game differently is noticeably higher than in many rival products.

As we spiral towards an era of photo-realistic visuals, perfect physics and cinema-quality sound across all platforms and genres, it's always a pleasure to see a title that has a foot in the door already. *Riddick*'s incredible visuals have already raised this topic, but with Midway now offering the quintessential use of complex physics in a game we're edging that much closer to the high-end products that consumers will be demanding within a few years. All games should look as good as *Halo 2*, every developer should try to outdo *Vice City*'s soundtrack and, similarly, *Psi-Ops* has just won the honour of being a benchmark (alongside *Half-Life 2*, should it ever actually get released) in terms of physics. There really is no excuse any more. Developers of the world, take heed – if Midway can do it, what the hell is your excuse?

Psi-Ops' main problem (among the few that can occupy your brains past a few impressive set pieces) is that it tries too hard to raise the difficulty bar and ends up doing so artificially. The temptations we've mentioned earlier are an acceptable form of this, but as you progress into the latter part of the game you can't help but feel that a few easy ways out have been taken in design. Regardless, things are really looking up for Midway – after a few years of predominantly horrible output, titles like *Mortal Kombat: Deception* and the worryingly entertaining *NBA Ballers* (among others) mean that the once-troubled firm should have a great end to the year. For the record, though, this reviewer would like to state that no part of this review was written under mind control. Did we mention how awesome Midway is?



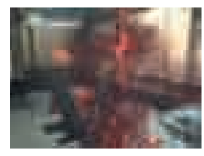
VERDICT 8/10
EMPOWERING, REWARDING AND ENJOYABLE

games™ FINGERPRINT
WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE
HAVOK: Very few games can match up to *Psi-Ops*' splendid physics.
MIND BULLETS: Burn, burst and butcher enemies who don't even know you're there.



Your various powers are restored at specific intervals, complete with well-integrated training sections.

PS2 £39.99 SEPT '04



While *Psi-Ops* does look slightly better on the Microsoft console, it suffers a little from *Tony Hawk* syndrome – pick up a PlayStation2 pad and, control-wise, things are a little more structured.

FAQs

Q. HOW MANY POWERS?
There are six in total, from Telekinesis and Remote Viewing to the sick and searing pleasure of Pyrokinesis.

Q. BIG BOSSES?
Battles with fellow Psi Operatives are drawn-out, pattern-based affairs that generally work pretty darn well.

Q. GUNS OR PSI?
Both are equally enjoyable in their own right, but we can't get enough of making enemies fall a horribly long way…

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
Xbox
ORIGIN
UK
PUBLISHER
Microsoft
DEVELOPER
Climax
PRICE
£39.99
RELEASE
September '04
PLAYERS
1



SUDEKI

HOW THE WEST WASN'T QUITE WON





FUSED
BRINGING GENRES TOGETHER
HALF-BLOOD: *Sudeki* brings the FPS and RPG genres together in its unusual combat style that uses first- and third-person views. This does add variety, but neither aspect is great, making it seem botched.

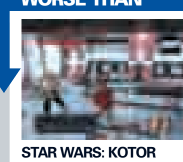
Once you've heard this guy camp it up, you'll know just what he can't get enough of…

DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS: HEROES



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



STAR WARS: KOTOR

This is the year that Microsoft starts collecting its games from the developers who have so far been reluctant to come up with the goods, so these should be a great couple of months for the Xbox as long-awaited products start to rain down on the shelves. *Sudeki* has been sitting in the wings for some time (along with *Fable*, *Halo 2* and, dare we say it, *Galleon*), and now, at long last, the game is ready to meet the public. However, despite the hype, the gorgeous screenshots and enchanting artwork, there has always been doubt in the back of gamers' minds about how the western-developed RPG would stand up against the *Zelda*s and *Final Fantasy*s of this world.

Sadly, for the hardened genre fan, *Sudeki* is likely to disappoint in many ways, leaving the game in the shadows of more prominent forthcoming events such as *Fable*, *Jade Empire* and *KOTOR II*. This is a shame, because at first glance, the marvellous world of *Sudeki* seems like an enchanting place; an ideal setting for a game that could occupy so much of an Xbox owner's time as they concern themselves with the intricacies of the characters, the desire to complete every sub-quest, and the drive to know the fate of this interactive fairy tale. Indeed, the uninitiated RPG gamer will find *Sudeki*'s western style and lack of traditional background so unintimidating and fresh that it could be the best £40 they ever spend. Games such as *Final Fantasy* and *Zelda* are almost in a different class, but *Sudeki* is a kind of RPG-lite that eases players into the overwhelming world of stats and fantastical mumbo jumbo that so many gamers eat, sleep and breathe.

Sadly, as so many people picked up Bioware's *Star Wars* RPG on the Xbox, the number of RPG-curious gamers out there has dwindled

Here's a Skill Strike in action. When your character has been built up, these can eliminate foes with one hit.

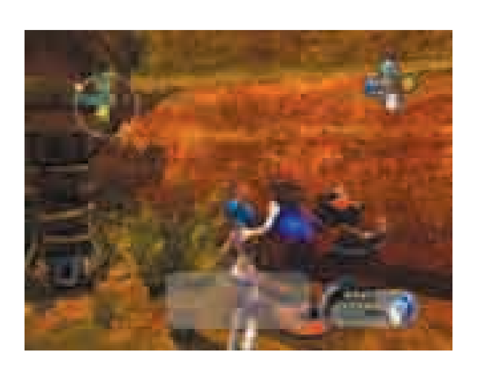


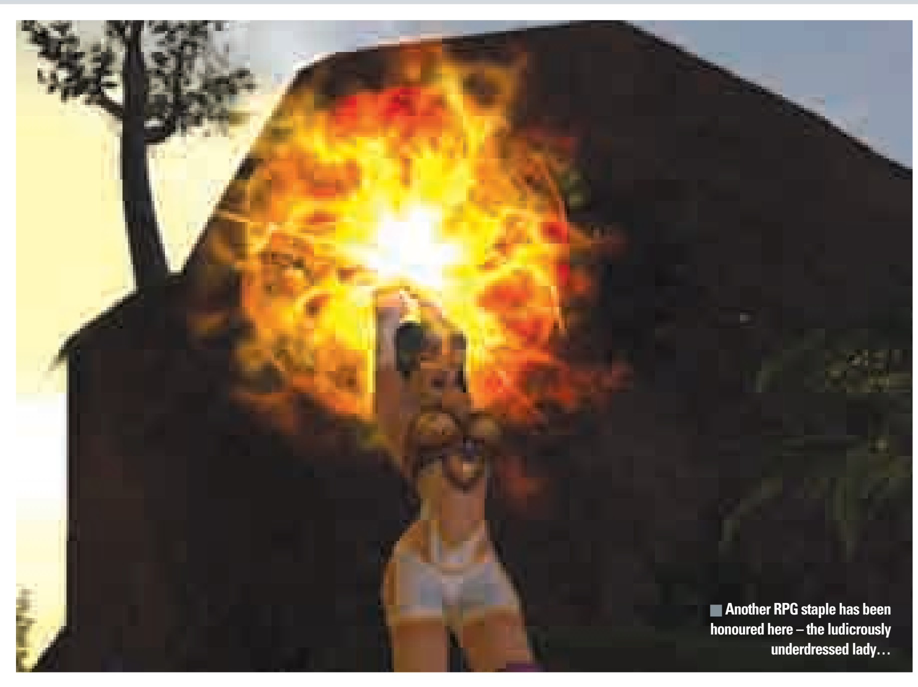
This is where you receive a Spirit Strike, which can be used in combat to obliterate everything in sight.



THAT'S THE SPIRIT

As is expected from an RPG, *Sudeki* is chock-full of magic and mysticism. Each of the four characters has two types of magical attack, known as Skill Strikes and Spirit Strikes. Skill Strikes are regular magic attacks that can cause damage, increase ability, heal party members or just cancel out negative effects. These Strikes are accessed through the quick menu, and when this is open time slows to accommodate the odd moment of indecision. Each Strike comes with its own satisfying animation and nugget of magical wisdom from the casting player. Taking it to the next level are the Spirit Strikes, which make the Skill Strikes seem like Paul Daniels' card tricks. Players work hard to obtain Spirit Strikes, and almost twice as hard to build up the SSP required to cast them. However, it's well worth the wait, as Spirit Strikes will obliterate all but the toughest bad guys from a combat scenario.





Another RPG staple has been honoured here – the ludicrously underdressed lady…

significantly, leaving *Sudeki* with few avenues for escape. Yes, the game is an incredible achievement in visual flair, but the gameplay engine that lurks beneath leaves a lot to be desired. Puzzles seem too obvious in some places (and downright insulting in others) as the developer allows too little control over the action, forcing players to use one specific character at a time instead of inviting them to become inventive and creative with the skills available.

Frame rate is also an issue, as the game desperately tries to load all the lighting effects and environmental intricacies into all aspects of play, but this is a minor frustration as this particular issue is limited to the leisurely paced exploration sections of the game. The combat itself is smooth and this is a massive plus; if it wasn't, the game would be virtually unplayable. Why? Well, *Sudeki* isn't a turn-based RPG; it splits its action between third-person combo fighting, and… first-person shooting. Whereas the combo fighting – which sits somewhat uncomfortably between hack-and-slash and turn-based melee action – will eventually be accepted by the RPG community, it's doubtful that purists will ever forgive Climax for the shooting sections. There's nothing technically wrong with this element of combat (again emphasising the fact that *Sudeki* really is for raw role-play recruits), but the fact that it's how half the playable characters fight really narrows the scope of the game. Ironically, the developer's intention was probably to add extra depth to the gameplay by offering western gamers a perspective with which they feel comfortable. Sadly, this will probably sit uncomfortably with both RPG and FPS fans for different reasons.

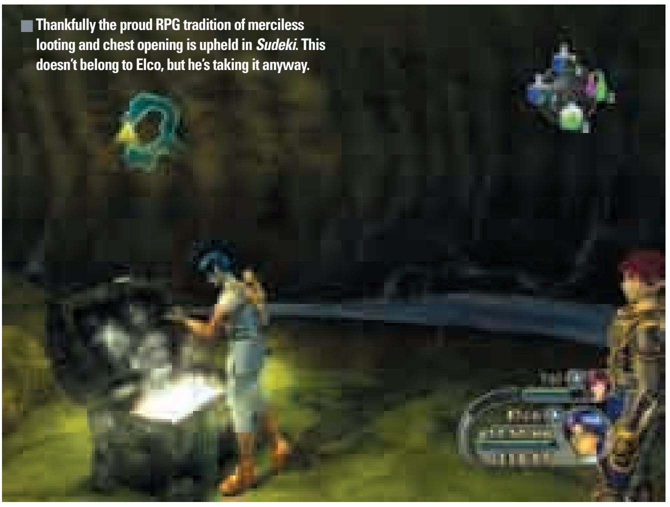
Sudeki is sure to be seen as a letdown by the hardcore RPG community, but there are still enough features here to recommend it. Although the voice acting gives the game an element of *Carry On Adventuring*, this can easily be forgiven and explained away as part of the title's ingrained sense of humour. The background sounds and music are to be commended, as they help to draw you into the fantasy world, yet other issues seem to work against it to keep you at arm's length. Unfortunately though, RPG titles live and die by their ability to engage and excite the player through believable and admirable heroes, a larger-than-life plot, and gameplay that grabs the imagination and won't let it rest until the bitter end. *Sudeki* certainly has the potential but is littered with too many pitfalls, causing it to settle for something far less than greatness.

FAQs

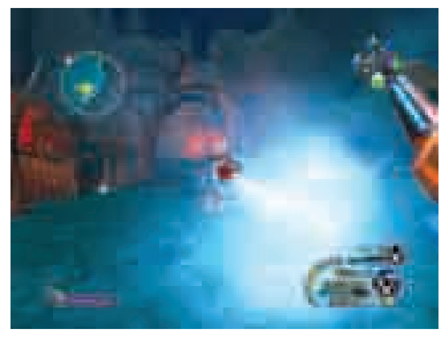
Q. A WESTERN RPG? SURELY NOT?
Sudeki is very western, yet at the same time it desperately wants to imitate the great Japanese RPG tradition.

Q. DOESN'T CLIMAX MAKE RACING GAMES?
Climax is famous for its *MotoGP* series, but after the naff *Italian Job*, who can blame it for a change in direction?

Q. WHY HAS THE GAME TAKEN SO LONG TO ARRIVE?
Not sure. Although it's visually impressive, there are many technical issues that really should have been sorted.

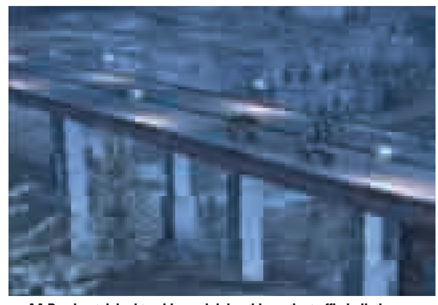


Thankfully the proud RPG tradition of merciless looting and chest opening is upheld in *Sudeki*. This doesn't belong to Elco, but he's taking it anyway.



It's a western tradition, but we can't help but feel that *Sudeki* might have been better off without the FPS combat…





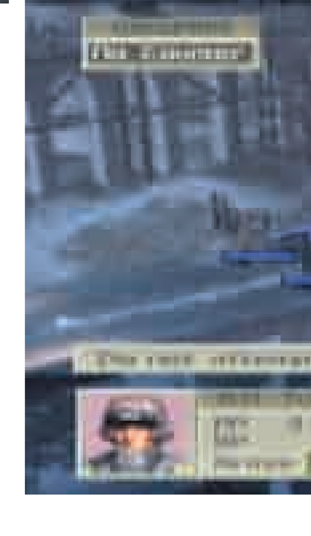
AA Roadwatch had trouble explaining this on the traffic bulletin.



Ooh, look, real places. Why not take your Wanzer on a grand tour?

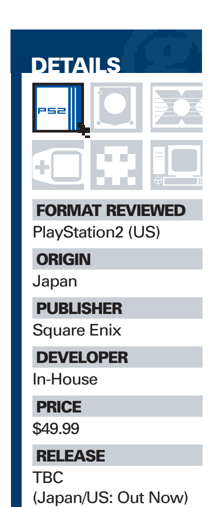


The mechs look fantastic, but the weird, dislocated-jaw floaty heads really lower the tone.



YOU, BADLY ANIMATED FLOATING HEAD – SIT DOWN AND SHUT THE MECH UP

FRONT MISSION 4



DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2 (US)

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Square Enix

DEVELOPER
In-House

PRICE
$49.99

RELEASE
TBC
(Japan/US: Out Now)

PLAYERS
1

Followers of the excellent *Front Mission* series will know how to play with their tongues firmly in their cheeks. Walking robots with weapons – that we can dig. Believing that these leviathans of steel could ever be used in a mission where they must sneak through sewers that just happen to be big enough to accommodate giant mechs… now that's just stupid. But charming all the same.

The mixture of prime-cut turn-based strategy and utter nonsense continues, and this time it's not afraid to bore you into a button-pressing frenzy as you try to skip past some of the most incongruous cut-scenes possible. You don't want a pure strategy title – nope, you want *Unlimited SaGa*-esque conversations that seem to go on forever and are made up of characters talking to each other via scrolling text. Even if they have nothing to say, they'll say "...". You can't skip these sections, only fast-forward through them, and you can't have a quick battle à la *Advance Wars* because Square Enix obviously believes that you don't want that. Apparently, what you do want is the PS2's finest strategy title to include more stodge than you'd find in mecha-Elvis' podgy colon.

Whereas the main game is described by state-of-the-art 3D representations of mech-on-mech combat, and the FMV is good enough to put the *Patlabour* anime series to shame, the meat of the game's narrative consists of mostly voiceless text and floating heads where only the jaw has been seen fit for animation, as if someone was in a hurry to get their part of the project done before lunch. How Square can mix such beauty with such an ancient conceit without feeling like it's padded the product is odd, to say the least; it knew what it was doing and we'd put it down to arrogance. Some may see it as a 'style thing'. It isn't stylish, it's tiring.

Front Mission, in case you'd forgotten, is a strategy title and it's in the strategy element (when you actually get to play it) where the game's true majesty resides. The design couldn't be more classical. Each unit is awarded Action Points that are used to move, fire or perform mech-specific operations like healing. If you finish your round with enough Action Points left over, the unit will be able to retaliate during the enemy's turn; if not, you're a sitting duck. Combat is a fluid and well-thought-out affair that sees you performing your moves quickly, simply and efficiently with minimum fuss and maximum effect.

Because Square seems to think the war game/RPG crossover is an absolute gem, there's no multiplayer mode but, thankfully, your AI enemy is at least inventive, quick to decide and there's the minimum of delay between rounds. Add to that the cunning way you can level up your units and ascribe special abilities (including a truly delicious

FAQs

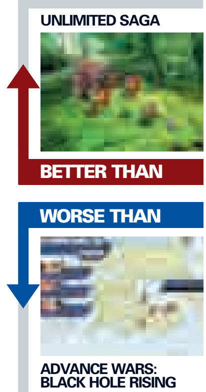
Q. TOO MUCH STORY?
Not really, but the fact that it's forced upon you (not to mention looking pretty bad) doesn't help matters.

Q. CAN I PLAY WITH FRIENDS?
No you can't, and, to be honest, we think that's pretty rubbish.

Q. WHY THE OBSESSION WITH ROBOTS?
In the words of Hideo Kojima, "It's just our culture". What an insightful man.



Nonsense? Yes, yes it is. But only while these characters keep mithering on. As soon as they quit yapping, things start to look up.



Wanzers may have to pay increased congestion charges, so watch out…



joint attack where two mechs are told to watch over each other) and you've got pretty much exactly what you could have wanted for *Front Mission* on PS2. It's the same, with only good things added and nothing taken away to pacify those whose idea of a strategy game begins and ends with the *Command & Conquer* series.

Turn-based-strategy works in the 21st Century, there is no doubt. Everything about the combat is handled with panache. The way missiles scrape their way through the sky, the heavy impact of artillery and the moment of death when a defeated unit keels over like a busted R2 unit all add to the visual prize of your strategic planning. It's a beauty to play, visually it's crisp and endearing, and once you've built up your squad to a level where you will no longer feel harassed by a measly battle tank, you'll be hooked. The levels, though never cluttered with superfluous detail, are well stocked and the South American and European theatres of battle make for a tabletop of such quality that it makes painting lead figures seem pointless for anything other than an exercise in brush control. But, yes indeed, if you were to play *Front Mission* with dice you'd at least get to fight a human adversary, which brings us back to where we started.

It seems that we're in the era when companies have forgotten what it is that they have that we, the consumers, want. *Advance Wars* on the Cube looks like a cruel joke invented by a disgruntled ex-employee of 3DO. As it turns out, it's no joke – just very, very upsetting. The percentage of actual game in *Front Mission 4* is the best piece of mech strategy that you will play on the PS2. If only it was built just as a game and not as a way to tell a story mimed by blathering idiots, we'd be looking at something very special indeed.

VERDICT 7/10

EXCEPTIONAL STRATEGY MARRED BY DULL RPG SECTIONS

(KISS MY) SHINY METAL ASS

These aren't mechs – they're 'Wanzers'. Sniggering at the back aside, the word makes sense – think Panzer as in tank and you'll get it. Each of your Wanzers can be totally customised from scratch. Each type of unit has its own weight limit which ensures you can't just pile every weapon and modification on one chassis. And you can paint them in colours set to make sure your walking death machine doesn't look like it's been painted by four-year-olds who have just been force fed cane sugar and anti-Ritalin.





Two surrenders and one well-placed W3P grenade. If only you could hear the screams.



The sound effects are, as ever, ear shattering. We recommend turning the bass all the way up.

RAINBOW SIX 3:

UBISOFT? MORE LIKE UBI-HARD…



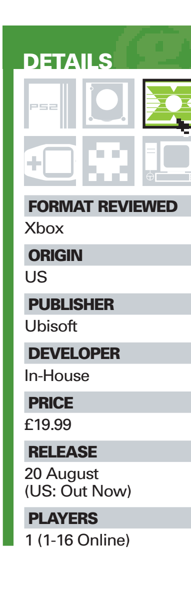
The team AI seems a lot more refined in *Black Arrow*; door entry, in particular, feels smoother.

No matter how well you think you know the levels there's always going to be the odd surprise or two.

For many people, Ding and friends have become like family members – but not the kind you avoid at social functions. Instead, we're more than happy to see the rough-and-ready Rainbow team return for another party, a party that's sure to result in much giddy delight. In many ways, playing this game does feel like meeting up with a favourite relative – you instantly know where you're at, thanks largely to the fact that *Black Arrow* uses the same game engine as last time. Yes, so there are some tweaks here and there, but this is essentially the same engine… although you should note we say 'engine' here, not 'game'.

The first thing you'll probably notice is that Ubisoft appears to be a lot more comfortable with the way everything works this time round, with the result being more time spent on refining the gameplay, adding new features and balancing the levels. The environments in particular have received a lot more work for this instalment, while the missions are a lot bigger than before and have some ingenious use of multi-levelled areas. You really need to keep your wits about you going into some of the areas because shots can come from anywhere – not good now that the terrorists seem to have a penchant for shoulder-mounted rockets.

Don't worry, though – the game hasn't gone all *Quake* on you. These rocket-launcher moments aren't waiting for you around every corner… just



FORMAT REVIEWED
Xbox

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Ubisoft

DEVELOPER
In-House

PRICE
£19.99

RELEASE
20 August
(US: Out Now)

PLAYERS
1 (1-16 Online)

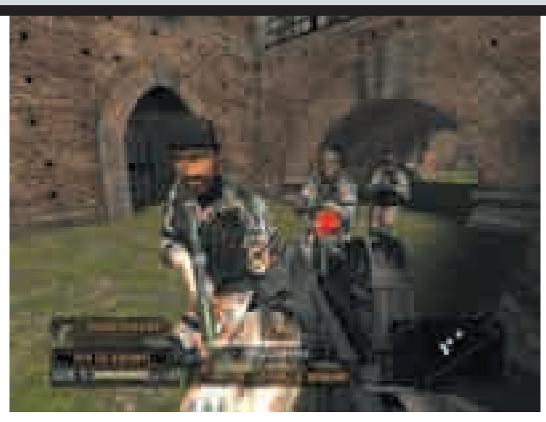


FAQs

Q. ISN'T THIS JUST MULTIPLAYER?
No, this is a completely new title with an extensive new single-player Story mode.

Q. WHAT ABOUT THE CLASSIC MAPS?
Don't worry – your favourite maps (such as Airport) have been upgraded and redone for this game.

Q. DO I NEED THE HEADSET?
It does make the playing experience more fun but all the orders can still be issued using the pad.



The character models have been improved this time round. Unfortunately, they're still all men. That's the counter-terrorism glass ceiling in action.

gamesTM ENHANCED

IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL

LEVEL PEGGING: Both the look and the structure of the levels have been massively worked over.

MORE IS MORE: New game modes for both offline and online play keep you hooked for even longer.

FULLY LOADED

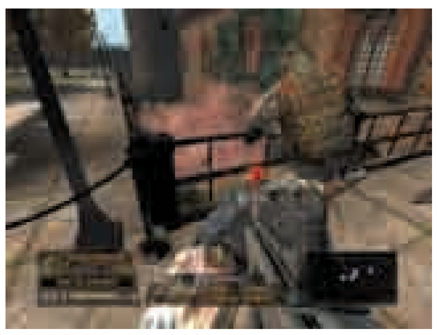
A very large feature of the game is, of course, the Xbox Live play. Thankfully, it's even better than before. There are an obscene amount of maps to choose from and they've all been refined to the point where they're at the kind of quality found in the more recent download maps. There are also two new game modes – Conquest and Retrieval. The first is a King Of The Hill affair that requires you to hold two satellite uplinks for a certain amount of time to score a win, while the second sees one team infiltrate a level and recover an item while team number two tries to stop them. We're guessing both will soon become flavour of the month on Live…

BLACK ARROW

enough to make your hands sweat and keep you on your toes. Still, this game is no walkover. The terrorist AI, for instance, has been worked over to the point where it's rare not to be surprised on a mission. Blind firing and wild runs for glory are all still in here, but now you find the terrorists making more tactical plays too.

Unfortunately for you, this means they'll hurl grenades, run off to get help if outnumbered and so on. With the improvements to the team AI, playing *Rainbow Six* makes other shooters like *Shadow Ops* look pathetic with their interpretation of squad/urban tactics.

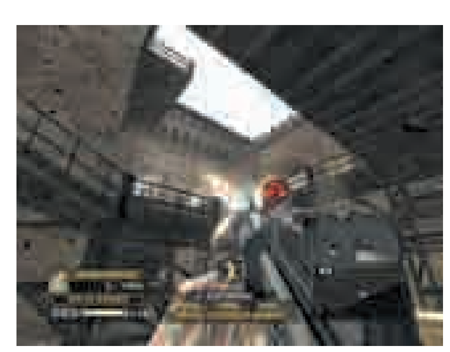
The input for voice commands in *Black Arrow* also appears to be improved, but then this has always varied from person to person. As a rule of thumb, if you only had a couple of problems before then you're probably going to have fewer now. There are plenty of new voice commands to fill gaps the first game left open as well, such as 'demo up on zulu' or 'leave hostage' – nothing particularly earth-shattering, but nice to have anyway. Of course, playing with fictional men is one thing but it's in the multiplayer modes that *Black Arrow* manages to really shine. The biggest addition this time around is the inclusion of split-screen co-operative play, which runs surprisingly smoothly with few hang-ups. The only drawback is that you've only got half a screen to look at and, by its very nature, *Rainbow Six* is a long-range game (unlike *Halo*, for instance, where most of the combat is up close and personal).



This castle level is one of the highlights of the single-player game.

In addition to the split-screen play, there are also a few new game modes that offer plenty of replay value for the single man – namely the Terrorist Hunts (which we all know and love from online play) and an additional single-player variant called Terrorist Rush. An ingenious mode, this puts a timer on the standard terrorist hunt and adds ten seconds every time you bag a bad guy. Not surprisingly, this is about as intense a gameplay experience as you can get when you crank the difficulty up a notch.

Obviously, we can understand why some people might hesitate over getting this if they already own *Rainbow Six 3*, but don't make that mistake; with all these new features and additions this is well worth the admission fee. *Black Arrow* is a pot of gold, and it's not even the end of the Rainbow… Not by a long way.



It's medically impossible to get bored of shooting things. Fact.



VERDICT 8/10

DON'T BE FOOLED – THIS IS MORE THAN JUST AN UPDATE





DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2 (Jap)

OTHER FORMATS
Xbox, PC

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Konami

DEVELOPER
Konami TYO

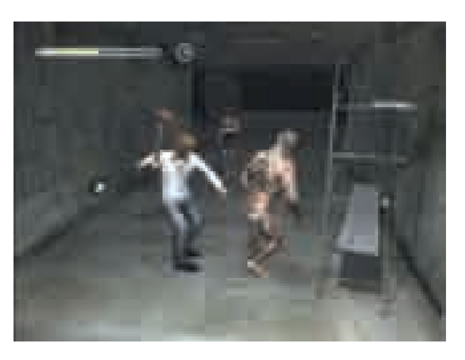
PRICE
¥6,980

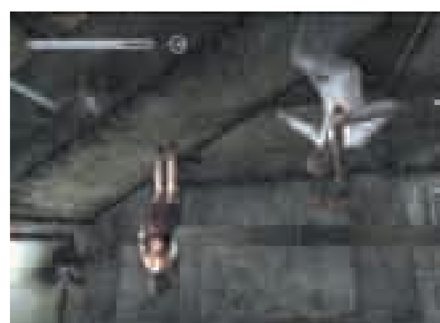
RELEASE
September '04
(Japan: Out Now)

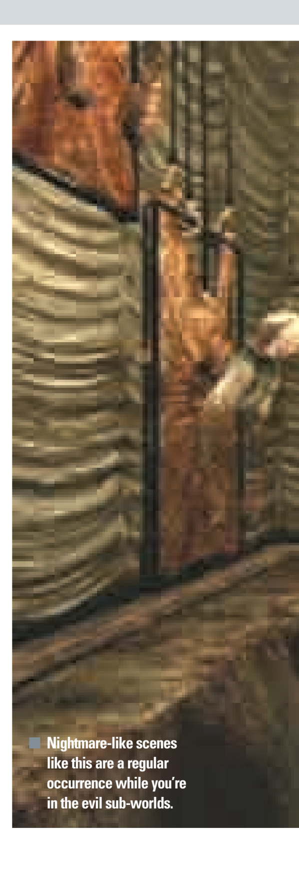
PLAYERS
1

KONAMI SHOWS US AROUND A TOMB WITH A VIEW

SILENT HILL 4: THE ROOM







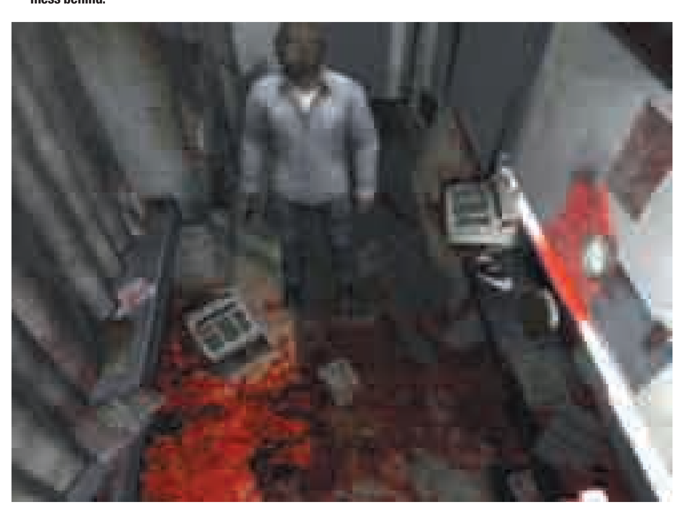
Nightmare-like scenes like this are a regular occurrence while you're in the evil sub-worlds.

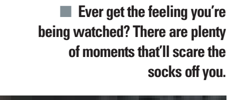
The *Silent Hill* series has always been about the fear. It's not the fear that paralyses some when a spider wanders across their bedroom ceiling, or what's felt when you think you may have left the iron on. It's a different kind, an unknown fear where you don't really know what's coming next but you're pretty sure it's going to be bloody hideous. Malformed, misshapen beasts that gut people without a second thought are what *Silent Hill* is all about, and in this area *The Room* doesn't disappoint. From the word go you're treated to some of the worst horrors you can think of, and they're some of the most disturbing yet.

Whereas the last three *Silent Hill* games have been set in large sprawling areas, this time you've been trapped inside your cramped apartment by the forces of evil and have to try to escape, preferably with your life. Thankfully, all the action doesn't take place in just three small rooms. A handy portal has opened up in your bathroom and this will lead you to evil-drenched sub-worlds where the (un)usual suspects will try to stop you from discovering the truth behind these strange events. This, somewhat ironically, means that the apartment from which you've been trying to escape soon becomes the one place where you're actually safe, and you'll find yourself heading back there to save your game and recover energy.

A key difference between *The Room* and past *Silent Hill* games is that your inventory is now limited. Rather than having the bottomless pockets that featured in previous titles, if you aren't selective about what you're picking up and taking with you into the various monster-ridden worlds you'll find yourself unable to pick up any more items, thus

The murders come thick and fast. And as you can see, most of them leave quite a mess behind.





Ever get the feeling you're being watched? There are plenty of moments that'll scare the socks off you.





games™ FINGERPRINT

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

MONSTER MASH: Only in a game from this series will you meet such a strange collection of beasties.

MIND TRICKS: It's near impossible to not be unnerved. The perfect psychological nightmare.

LIVING IN A BOX

Although there are much larger areas to explore, the apartment in which you've been sealed will act as a hub throughout the game and you'll need to travel back multiple times to complete various tasks and pick up clues. While you're in your room, the game will switch to a first-person view and you'll have all the time in the world to gaze through the windows, search around your possessions and even spy on your neighbour through your very own peephole. Add to this the fact your flat contains the only save point in the game, houses your item chest and has regenerative powers (in the first half of the game, at least) and you've got yourself a cozy little sanctuary. There are also a few surprises waiting to be discovered, so it's worth having a good look around.



FAQs

Q. SO I'LL BE SCARED, THEN?
Don't expect to jump out of your seat but this is definitely one of the creepiest games we've seen.

Q. MULTIPLE ENDINGS?
Of course. It wouldn't be *Silent Hill* without them.

Q. HOW LONG ARE WE TALKING?
Shorter than the rest of the games but you're still looking at a good eight hours.

losing the ability to solve some of the puzzles. The solution to this problem comes in the form of a large chest in your apartment. You can use this to store objects and weapons until you wish to use them, which frees up your hands to pick up any new objects that you happen to stumble across. Although this adds a dash of realism to the otherwise twisted *Silent Hill* world, it also increases the fear factor. Filling your inventory with pistol ammo and going gung-ho is no longer an option as you can usually only spare one slot for ammo at any one time. And a world full of long-tongued zombie dogs and mutant gibbon men seems much more intimidating when you have no more than 20 bullets at your disposal.

The game looks and feels great. The first-person action of your apartment prison is clean and almost clinical when compared to the grainy picture and slanting viewpoints of the different sub-worlds, and some of the death scenes are truly disturbing. Sound is used to great effect as well. Music has been used sparingly and is usually only present when a mood is being set, so most of the sounds you'll hear will be the chattering and rattling of the enemies. This is unnerving, to say the least, and the first time you come across a portal and hear the children wailing from inside, you really won't want to go in.

Nope, as far as atmosphere goes this is hard to top, but there are faults. For the first half of the game you'll be discovering new things and enjoying the ride, but once you've hit the mid-point things go downhill. For some reason you're forced to return to five of the six areas you've already completed in order to solve a new batch of puzzles. To make these areas a challenge again, more monsters are added to the mix and your regeneration ability is removed. This makes up the whole second half of the game, and after such an impressive start it's a huge disappointment. Granted, some of the locked doors spring open and provide some new treats but overall it's all too similar, and without the exploring element to the levels they just tend to drag on.

Silent Hill 4 is by far the most atmospheric of the titles to date, and if played under the right conditions will creep out even the most hardened survival horror fan. But being made to traipse over the same levels a second time seems a little lazy and really saps a lot of the enjoyment out of the experience.



SHAME ABOUT THE SECOND HALF



■ The *Silent Hill* world is as disturbing as ever. Blood-covered walls come as standard.

SILENT HILL 3

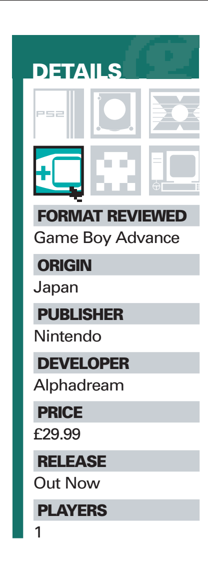


BETTER THAN

WORST THAN



RESIDENT EVIL ZERO



FORMAT REVIEWED
Game Boy Advance

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Nintendo

DEVELOPER
Alphadream

PRICE
£29.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1

HAMTARO: HAM-HAM GAMES

JUST LIKE WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS, BUT WITH HAMSTERS

No, your eyes aren't deceiving you – those really are sporting hamsters, cavorting and competing in all manner of athletic events for your sick and twisted pleasure. Whether that's enough to get you strangely excited isn't any of our business, but the fact that Nintendo's latest take on the popular Hamtaro series manages to incorporate the delights of *Track & Field*-style gameplay is intriguing to say the least. It may be a game that, at first glance, is aimed squarely at the younger gamer but take the time to enjoy what it has to offer and it soon becomes clear that it's good clean fun no matter how old you are.

Ignoring the superficial plot (Hamtaro and friends are invited to Rainbow Land to take part in the Ham-Ham Games tournament), the action is relatively self-explanatory – spend seven days competing in 17 different sporting activities and try to win as many gold medals as possible. From regular athletic events such as Hammer Throwing, Pole Vault and Triple Jump to more obscure ones like Synchronised Swimming and Bird-Back Riding (the Ham-Ham equivalent of an equestrian event), there's plenty of variety here. Mercifully, the creativity within each event helps keeps things away from the usual button-bashing affair – for instance, the Marathon (with its demand for musical rhythm) shows how a drawn-out activity can be made interesting rather than repetitive.

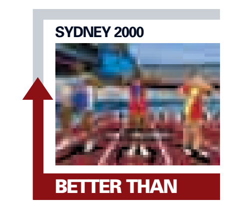
Unfortunately, some of the events don't work quite so well. Tennis, for example, is incredibly annoying while Hurdles is more a matter of luck than judgement. What's more, *Ham-Ham Games*' attempts to bring more diversity to the gameplay also leave things feeling a little flat if you've enjoyed previous instalments in the series. Certainly, the adventuring that's present between events manages to hold its own (particularly after you complete the game once and receive an item that helps take the exploration a step further) but compared to the hidden depths of *Ham-Ham Heartbreak*, it's a little disappointing.

Of course, only the most selfish or cynical of gamers will see this as a real negative – this is, after all, a game predominantly aimed at those with a short attention span. As a game that wears all its high points on its fur-covered sleeve (and hides a few more inside for good measure), *Ham-Ham Games* delivers everything you could hope for from a GBA title. It's not particularly big and it's not especially clever, but it is good fun and that's what matters.



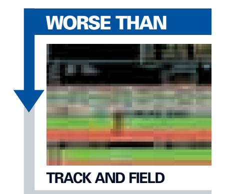
SIMPLE FUN, WITH ENOUGH REWARD FOR ALL AGES

SYDNEY 2000



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



TRACK AND FIELD

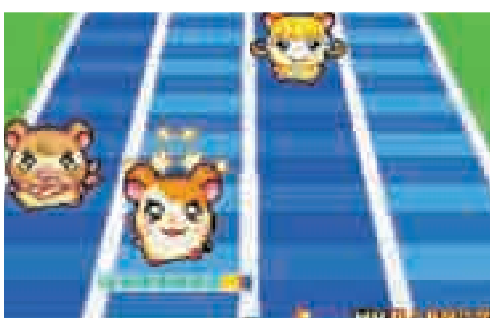
games™ FUSED
BRINGING GENRES TOGETHER
TRACKMANIA: Simplifying traditional athletics-based gameplay helps keep things accessible.
HAM-HA!: The Hamtaro licence has worked again, creating a vibrant world for players to explore.

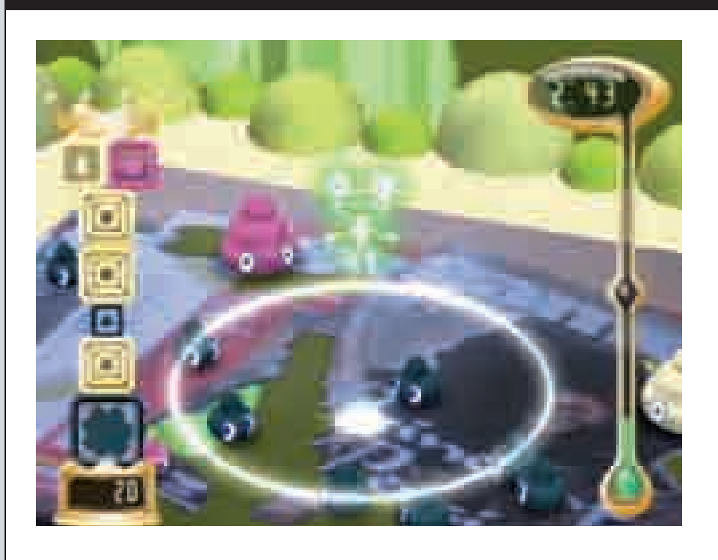


Ever seen a pole-vaulting hamster? Neither had we… But it's an experience we wouldn't pass up for the world.



Which Ham-Ham you control depends on the event – the Hammer Throw, for instance, is something only Oxnard can pull off.







Larger Boonchies explode if you bounce near them too much, creating deadly shockwaves.

games™ CONNECTED

EXPANDING THE GAMEPLAY

SNAP HAPPY: By uploading digital photos you can create an endless supply of levels to enjoy.

GET MOBILE: With a Network Adapter and the right mobile, you can upload pics from your phone.

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2 (Jap)

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
SCEJ

DEVELOPER
Nana-On Sha

PRICE
¥5,800

RELEASE
TBA
(Japan: Out Now)

PLAYERS
1

VIB RIPPLE

TURN INTO A RUBBER BALL AND BOUNCE, BOUNCE, BOUNCE

Trampolining – hardly the most obvious gaming concept, particularly from a developer with a past steeped exclusively in the realm of musical rhythm action titles. Nevertheless, this third game from Nana-On Sha marks a change in direction; whereas *Vib Ribbon* and *Mojib Ribbon* could be considered videogame depictions of the aural medium, *Vib Ripple* is definitely focused on a more visual form. The action sees Vibri (our stylised sketchbook hero) move away from the scrolling line representing a wave of sound and onto a pictorially plastered canvas that propels him higher with each well-timed bounce. Despite the dramatic shift in focus, though, the aim is still simple – you bounce around, freeing trapped 2D pixelated recreations of real-life objects (called Peta Characters)… and that's about it.

However, making progress in *Vib Ripple* is rather more demanding than it appears. For instance, music is no longer a key part of the gameplay, but using the landscape's soaring qualities still demands plenty of rhythm; timing the press and release of the button as Vibri lands on and then leaves the canvas is crucial if you want to send him higher. Master this and it's onto the small matter of finding the Peta Characters hidden in each stage, done by bouncing on different parts of the picture to uncover them, then jumping higher to literally 'rip' them off the canvas. A list on the screen shows those you need to find to clear a stage (with colour, shape and size generally suggesting where each can be found within the picture), but more often than not, there are extra items to be uncovered. The real skill is finding them all within the incredibly strict time limit to earn the coveted Golden Crowns – a task that grows all the more difficult as the pictures become increasingly complex and the dreaded Boonchies (enemies that explode if disturbed too often) become even more prolific…

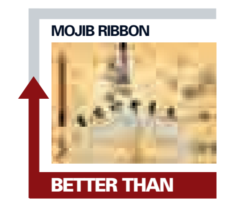
As typically bizarre and Japanese as it all sounds, *Vib Ripple* is also very enjoyable, particularly as the challenge increases and what started out as a breeze soon becomes an exploding, bouncing dash for success. That you can import your own photos to create your own levels – much like *Vib Ribbon*'s option to use your own music – is just the icing on the very bouncy cake. If you've got a creative eye, this is game that just keeps on giving.



Vibri's high-pitched announcement of every Peta is always a laugh, though it'll take a while to find all 180 of them.

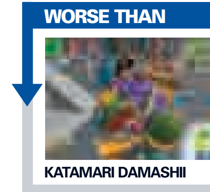
VERDICT 7/10
CUNNINGLY ADDICTIVE GAME UNDER A SIMPLE VENEER

MOJIB RIBBON



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



KATAMARI DAMASHII

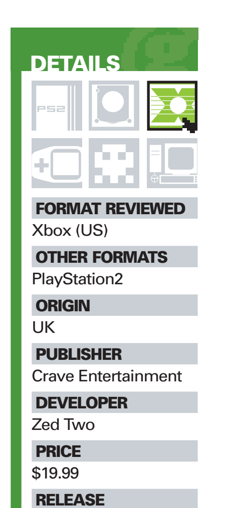

Rather than simply shoot opponents you have two crosshairs that need to be lined up.



Despite keeping in touch with each other, the enemies rarely act on shared information.

FUTURE TACTICS: THE UPRISING

INNOVATION? CHECK. GAMEPLAY? ER…



DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
Xbox (US)

OTHER FORMATS
PlayStation2

ORIGIN
UK

PUBLISHER
Crave Entertainment

DEVELOPER
Zed Two

PRICE
$19.99

RELEASE
18 October
(US: Out Now)

PLAYERS
1-2

If review scores were based solely on original ideas and the ability to successfully mix a variety of genres, then *Future Tactics* would be onto a winner. Unfortunately for Zed Two's swansong (the Pickford brothers' studio is no more), the many other aspects that a good game requires to succeed are barely noticeable among *Future Tactics'* average gameplay and low-budget roots.

By looking at these screenshots, it's tempting to pass *Tactics* off as another *Worms 3D* variant, but this would be unfair as this game is chock-full of innovative and entertaining ideas. A reasonably strong storyline, interesting (though poorly voiced) characters and some expansive, fully destructible environments are just some of the positive aspects here. Add an RPG-based experience system to an interesting fusion of turn-based and full-on action gameplay; a sprinkling of physics; the neat way the enemies relay information to each other; and a fairly enjoyable (though limited) multiplayer, and *Future Tactics'* success seems assured. Once you get past the intro, however, several irritating flaws start to undo all of Zed Two's hard work.

One of the most frustrating aspects is the unbalanced difficulty curve. You're thrust into some tough and often unfair opening levels, only to find the challenge dropping dramatically as you progress deeper into the admittedly enjoyable storyline. Damage is also unpredictable, making for some annoying restarts as a grunt will do up to four times the amount of damage he managed in the previous round, despite having no real advantage over you. The physics can also insult; objects and enemies will not always respond as you'd expect, and it's all too easy to find yourself left wide open to an attack after a successfully struck enemy fails to respond appropriately.

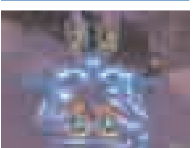
Indeed, *Future Tactics* constantly confounds expectations but not always in a good way. For all its jaunty music, interesting visuals and low price, nothing can stop this from being more than a decidedly average game that's unable to deliver its obvious potential.


Ending each turn will let you shield yourself from attacks, regain energy, or simply rest.

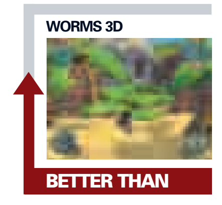
games™ FUSED
BRINGING GENRES TOGETHER
"I'M A STAT MAN": As well as gaining Experience Points by defeating enemies, you'll also find power-ups scattered throughout the levels. Pick them up to customise each character as you see fit.

VERDICT 5/10
NICE IDEAS MARRED BY UNEXCITING GAMEPLAY

PS2 $14.99 OUT NOW


Unsurprisingly, there's very little to differentiate the PS2 and Xbox versions of *Future Tactics*. While the controls seem slightly tighter than those on the Xbox, the PS2 version is let down by its inferior visuals and the lack of online play.

WORMS 3D



BETTER THAN

WORST THAN



ADVANCE WARS 2

ANOTHER REAL-TIME STRATEGY WAR GAME? TANKS, BUT NO TANKS

CODENAME: PANZERS

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
PC

ORIGIN
Hungary

PUBLISHER
CDV

DEVELOPER
Stormregion

PRICE
£34.99

RELEASE
September '04

PLAYERS
1 (1-8 online)

MINIMUM SPEC
Pentium III/Athlon 750MHz, 256Mb RAM, 8x CD-ROM, 3Gb hard disk space, DirectX 9-compatible graphics card, 56kbps modem (online play)

War, what is it good for? History suggests that it's ideal for expanding an empire, sorting out quarrelsome neighbours and wasting valuable resources. Greater than all these, though, is war's natural affinity with real-time strategy games. The tactical distribution of a carefully selected army is a great way to while away an afternoon and there are few things more satisfying than kicking back, giving the order and watching as your ten-strong fleet of tanks trundles into a rival base and lays waste to everyone and everything that's sporting the enemy colour scheme. From way back when the *Command & Conquer* series began to the more recent *Commandos* games there's plenty of life in this genre, though *Codename: Panzers* is not really living this life to the full.

Shrugging off the obvious appeal of creating hyper-futuristic, stealth prism-laser buggies (which in our minds are the ultimate in warfare vehicles) or the lure of Orcs and Elves, *Codename: Panzers* is set during the very real World War II and puts you in control of either the German, Soviet or western Allied troops. Everything that you'd expect to find here is accounted for: a large number of campaign missions, skirmish modes and the all-important multiplayer elements that promise to have all would-be commanders donning their khaki and preparing for war with their mates down the road.



It sounds promising but, to be honest, there really isn't anything here that we haven't seen a hundred times before, and for that reason alone it's very difficult to get excited about *Codename: Panzers*. There's nothing really wrong with the game – it looks good and plays reasonably well, but it won't blow you away. The attention to detail is easily the most impressive area – there are over 50 historically accurate vehicles, for instance, and the infantry can perform any number of commands ranging from the obvious firing at foes and healing the wounded through to inflating rubber dinghies and using field telephones. These touches are nice, but aren't nearly enough to hoist the game up to reach the bar that's been raised so high by previous titles of this type. If you're a fan of the genre then this is definitely worth a try, just don't expect to find anything jaw-droppingly original.

VERDICT 5/10
A GOOD EFFORT BUT NOTHING TO SHOUT ABOUT

SUDDEN STRIKE



BETTER THAN

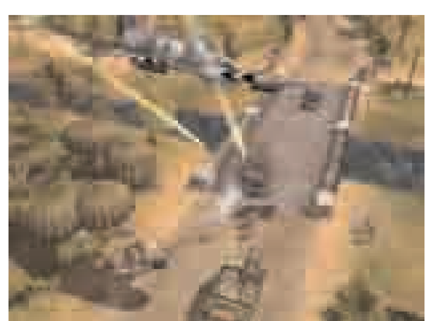
WORSE THAN



COMMANDOS 3: DESTINATION BERLIN



The three campaigns each have their own vehicles and weapons.



There are plenty of varied environments for you to wage war upon.



The game certainly looks great, but there's just not enough new material on offer to make this stand out next to the likes of the *Commandos* games.





Web Fluid will hold that miscreant tight, and *ruin* those combat trousers…

SPIDER-MAN 2

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF GTA GOT BITTEN BY A RADIOACTIVE SPIDER?

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

OTHER FORMATS
Xbox, GameCube, PC

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Activision

DEVELOPER
Treyarch

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1

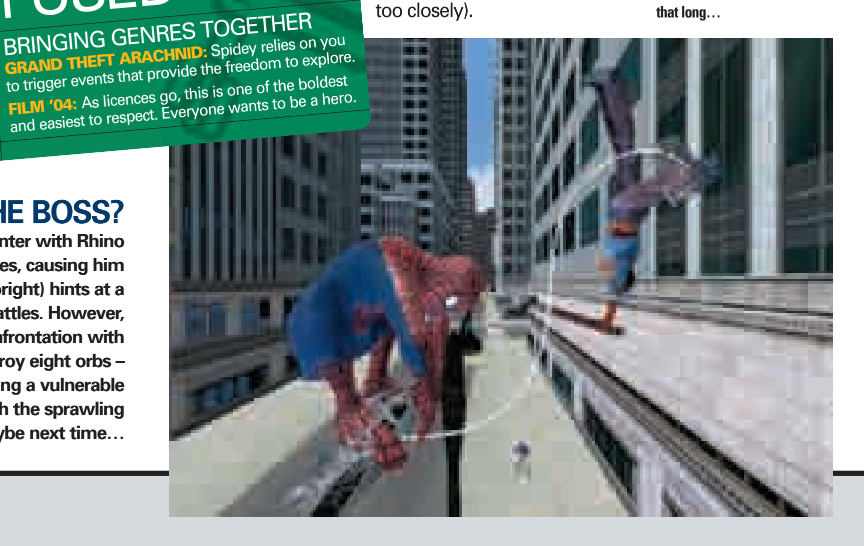
History dictates that move licences are usually, at best, a cheap cash-in. At worst, they're leeches feeding off box-office excesses. Honestly, when was the last time you saw a truly great film licence (well, apart from *Chronicles Of Riddick*)? *Spider-Man 2*, however, despite suffering the double credibility whammy of being a movie licence and a sequel, is an enjoyable, if flawed, title.

A game of stark contrasts, *Spider-Man 2* marries an expansive re-creation of New York (for Spidey to career though à la *GTA*) with boss encounters and challenges reminiscent of traditional platform games. Unsurprisingly, it's the former that's the most appealing. As game mechanics go, Spidey's web-swinging showcases some of the finest in recent memory. Lurching around the city is a genuine rush – fire your Web Shooter, swing with convincing motions, gaining speed and height as dictated by a believable physics engine. Changing direction abruptly is as reckless and enjoyable as it should be. It's even possible to dive off the Empire State Building and rescue Spidey with a quick web flick just before an untimely collision with the asphalt. Glorious. Yet while the streets never overflow with people and traffic, the feeling of patrolling a living city is convincing (if you don't scrutinise the AI too closely).

games™ FUSED
BRINGING GENRES TOGETHER
GRAND THEFT ARACHNID: Spidey relies on you to trigger events that provide the freedom to explore.
FILM '04: As licences go, this is one of the boldest and easiest to respect. Everyone wants to be a hero.

WHO'S THE BOSS?

Boss encounters are a mixed bag. An early encounter with Rhino promises much – indeed, avoiding his cumbersome moves, causing him to become dizzy and prone to attack (he's not too bright) hints at a rewarding 'identify weak spot and exploit' theme for battles. However, this quickly becomes abused by the tedious confrontation with Mysterio atop Liberty Island and the need to destroy eight orbs – particularly hard-to-reach orbs at that – before exposing a vulnerable spot. We're left dreaming of taking on the bosses through the sprawling New York Treyarch has so carefully constructed. Maybe next time…



Delivering Spider-justice can be fun, even if it doesn't take that long…



FAQs

Q. DOES WHATEVER A SPIDER CAN?
Absolutely – web spinning, wall crawling, 40-foot-in-air leaping and more, all from an intuitive control system.

Q. FAITHFUL TO THE FILM?
The inclusion of Black Cat, Shocker, Rhino and Mysterio means it doesn't strictly stick to the movie's template… but that's not necessarily a bad thing.

Q. WOULD STAN LEE BE PROUD?
Undoubtedly. Spider-Man behaves just as he should, as do all the Marvel characters.

ENTER THE MATRIX



BETTER THAN

WORST THAN



PRINCE OF PERSIA: SOT



Spider-Man's flexibility is remarkable – like Jet from *Gladiators* but more spidery.



As a solution to prison overcrowding it was rather unconventional…

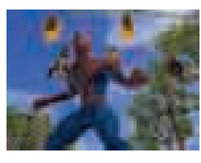
Sadly, the lack of variety in the scenarios in which Spidey gets involved scuppers things somewhat. Muggings, bank heists, runaway cars, men about to fall from precipices… they all recur with alarming regularity, shattering the illusion of a 'smart' city. Furthermore, each scenario rarely takes more than three minutes to complete, giving a real staccato rhythm to the game. Completion gets you Hero Points (used to buy new combat manoeuvres) and also drives the narrative – chapters only progress after a certain number of Points have been earned and specific objectives achieved. It's a system that leaves you free to explore the city and enjoy plenty of distractions, from locating hidden icons to completing time trials and even delivering pizzas. When the narrative does move forward, it does so in less than convincing style. Too often a transition between levels involves a timed race to a set location only to watch a short cut-scene before being sent on another mission. It almost would have been better to see a longer cut-scene than punctuate shorter ones with mindless wandering.

Obtaining a preordained number of Hero Points inevitably leads to confrontations with the game's villains – Rhino, Doc Ock, Shocker and Mysterio, the game taking a liberal approach to the movie's plot. Unfortunately, these showdowns criminally underuse the city that provides Spider-Man's greatest moments. Compared to the exhilarating freedom of New York, boss-fights feel cramped and disorienting and rely on 'Spider Sense' – a fancy name for a rudimentary dodge move. Repeated switch-throwing and the destruction of an arbitrary number of objects is also jarringly traditionalist game design and in stark contrast to the more freeform play of the city sections.

Indeed, the combat is generally weak, and though a wide variety of fighting moves can be unlocked, later battles disintegrate into something of a mess. In order to provide some form of challenge for our radioactive spider-augmented hero, even groups of common thugs begin exhibiting superhuman fighting abilities – blocking punches and kicks, avoiding projectiles and, a more significant problem, brandishing firearms. As the game progresses the number of gun-wielding criminals increases, making combat more of a chore than a real pleasure.

However, even taking into consideration these flaws, *Spider-Man 2* emerges as not only a movie licence that eschews the 'fast buck' approach, but as an enjoyable game in its own right – which is chiefly testament to just how compelling it is to have superpowers and a vast city in which to show them off.

XBOX/CUBE £39.99 OUT NOW



Both consoles (even the Cube) surpass the PS2 version in terms of graphics, and the controls work particularly well on the GameCube pad. The games are otherwise identical.

PC £29.99 OUT NOW



Don't be fooled if you're expecting a hi-res version of the console effort – the PC game is a completely different game that's too basic and unoriginal to be worth your time.



SPIDEY'S THE HERO BUT THE CITY'S THE STAR



CHAOS LEAGUE

WHEN MIDDLE-EARTH JOINED THE NFL…

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
PC

ORIGIN
France

PUBLISHER
Digital Jesters

DEVELOPER
Cyanide

PRICE
£29.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1-2

MINIMUM SPEC
600 MHz, 128Mb RAM, 64Mb graphics card, 600Mb hard disk space

To begin at the beginning, *Chaos League* is a game from French developer Cyanide that bears an uncanny resemblance to American football, but played by Orcs, Dwarves, Elves and other mythical creatures. It may sound like a bad idea, but the surprising truth is that this mixture of genres (the game is part RPG, part RTS and part sports sim) works very well indeed, and there are plenty of inventive and unique features in *Chaos League* to silence those who bemoan the lack of innovation in modern gaming.

The essence of the game is to get the ball into the other team's end zone. This is accomplished by using nine players from various races with differing skills and abilities. Matters are a tad more complex than simply picking up the ball and charging down the field, however. For starters, there are a variety of spells at the disposal of both sides – creating a fog so that the opposition can't see players, healing injured teammates, speeding up individual players, causing opponents to be struck by lightning… all of these devious tactics are at your disposal. Each team member has a limited amount of health (hit zero and they're stretchered off) and a finite amount of magical ability with which to cast those all-important spells, so your management nous will be needed too.

At first glance, *Chaos League* can be a little bewildering. The game is controlled with the mouse and keyboard, and individual commands are issued to players in a fashion akin to most real-time strategy games. Players can be grouped together so that they work as a unit (handy for defending and attacking), but it can still take some time to become familiar with the game's intricacies. Matters are considerably helped, however, by three game modes; Real-Time, Turn-Based and Active Pause. Although the game is intended to be played in real-time, those gamers who don't have the reflexes of a scalded cat will feel the benefit of the turn-based mode, or being able to issue orders while the game is paused and have them carried out when it resumes.

Add a solid league mode for extra longevity and *Chaos League* becomes even more appealing, as there are plenty of challenges in store once the top divisions are reached. With the exception of some misspelt menu options and a really annoying sense of humour (perhaps the French should steer clear of comedy), there's very little here not to like. This jack of all trades is a master, after all.

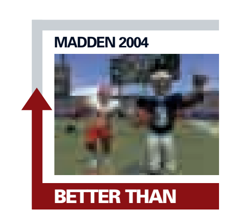
games™ FINGERPRINT

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

D&D: How many *Madden* clones let you play Ents as blockers for those speedy Goblin wide receivers?

A LA MODE: Three game modes mean this title appeals to a much wider audience.

MADDEN 2004



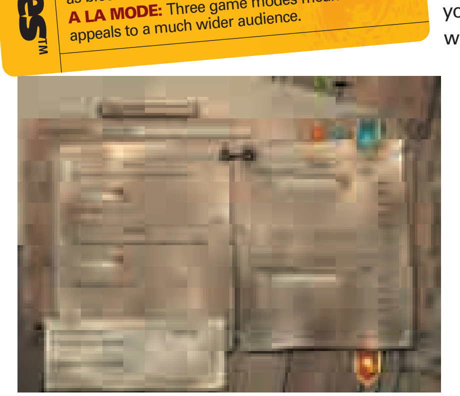
BETTER THAN

WORST THAN

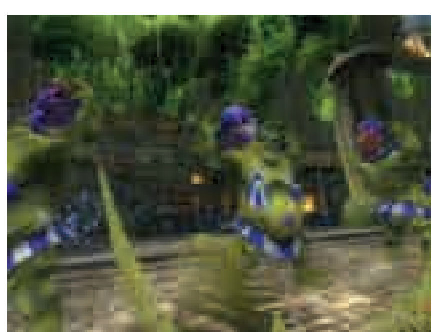


WARCRAFT III

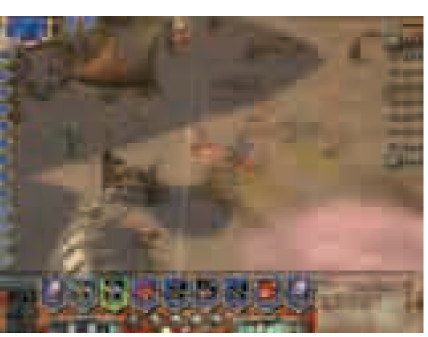
VERDICT 7/10
REFRESHINGLY INNOVATIVE AND GREAT FUN TO PLAY



You can dope your team and test rival players if you have the cash.



Orc cheerleaders are just as attractive as you would imagine.



It's a break for the line, sure, but not a regular break for the line…





There's plenty of adventuring to do between your rounds of golf – all in the same style as *Golden Sun*.



Do well in Story mode to unlock mini-game extras.

games™ CONNECTED

EXPANDING THE GAMEPLAY

TEE FOR TWO: Multiplayer golf can be enjoyed via a link-up cable or the new Wireless GBA Adapter.

BIG BROTHER: Unlock extra gameplay features by linking the GBA version to *Mario Golf* on the Cube.

DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
Game Boy Advance (US)

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Nintendo

DEVELOPER
Camelot

PRICE
$39.99

RELEASE
17 September (Japan/US: Out Now)

PLAYERS
1-2

CAMELOT PRESENTS A ROUND OF GOLF-DEN SUN

MARIO GOLF: ADVANCE TOUR

And there we were, thinking for all this time that 'RPG' stood for role-playing game. That it's taken a game from Nintendo (the gameplay innovator that it is) to convince us otherwise should come as no surprise, but the new concept of role-playing golf may seem a little too tenuous even for the Mario faithful. Thankfully, the term isn't as intense as it may imply, and rather than being some kind of nine-iron-wielding *Final Fantasy*, Camelot's latest title is simply another quality example of the *Mario Golf* series with several adventure elements between the holes.

Of course, the fact that *Advance Tour* owes more than a little, both visually and aurally, to Camelot's *Golden Sun* series may smack of laziness to some. However, the results of such a fusion actually work very well – not just from the adventure point of view, but also while playing golf; a scaling map like that in *Golden Sun* proves more than adequate for a game where accuracy is the key. Despite retaining the controls used by the GameCube version (including the automatic shot function for lesser-skilled players, and the more advanced multiple-button method), the game avoids becoming too fiddly and it's remarkably easy to quickly get skilled – something that's both a blessing and a curse, as you can soon find yourself flying through the various tournaments. The inclusion of numerous game modes, from traditional match play to more demanding mini-game challenges, is encouraging. However, the AI's inability to decide between being a seasoned pro and a bumbling amateur can make playing doubles games (a requirement for progression through the Story mode) rather annoying.

What is great, though, is that those who've sampled the delights of *Mario Golf* on the Game Boy Color will immediately feel at home here, with this GBA version attempting to pick up several years after where the GBC game left off. Experience with the last game is far from essential to enjoy this title, but Camelot has put in some neat touches for those who have. As both a companion to the Cube version – with which the game links up – and a standalone game, *Advance Tour* has more than enough to keep you satisfied.

VERDICT 7/10
A SOLID GOLF ADVENTURE WITH PLENTY TO OFFER

Experience Points need to be split between you and your partner to ensure those crucial victories during doubles tournaments.



TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2004



BETTER THAN

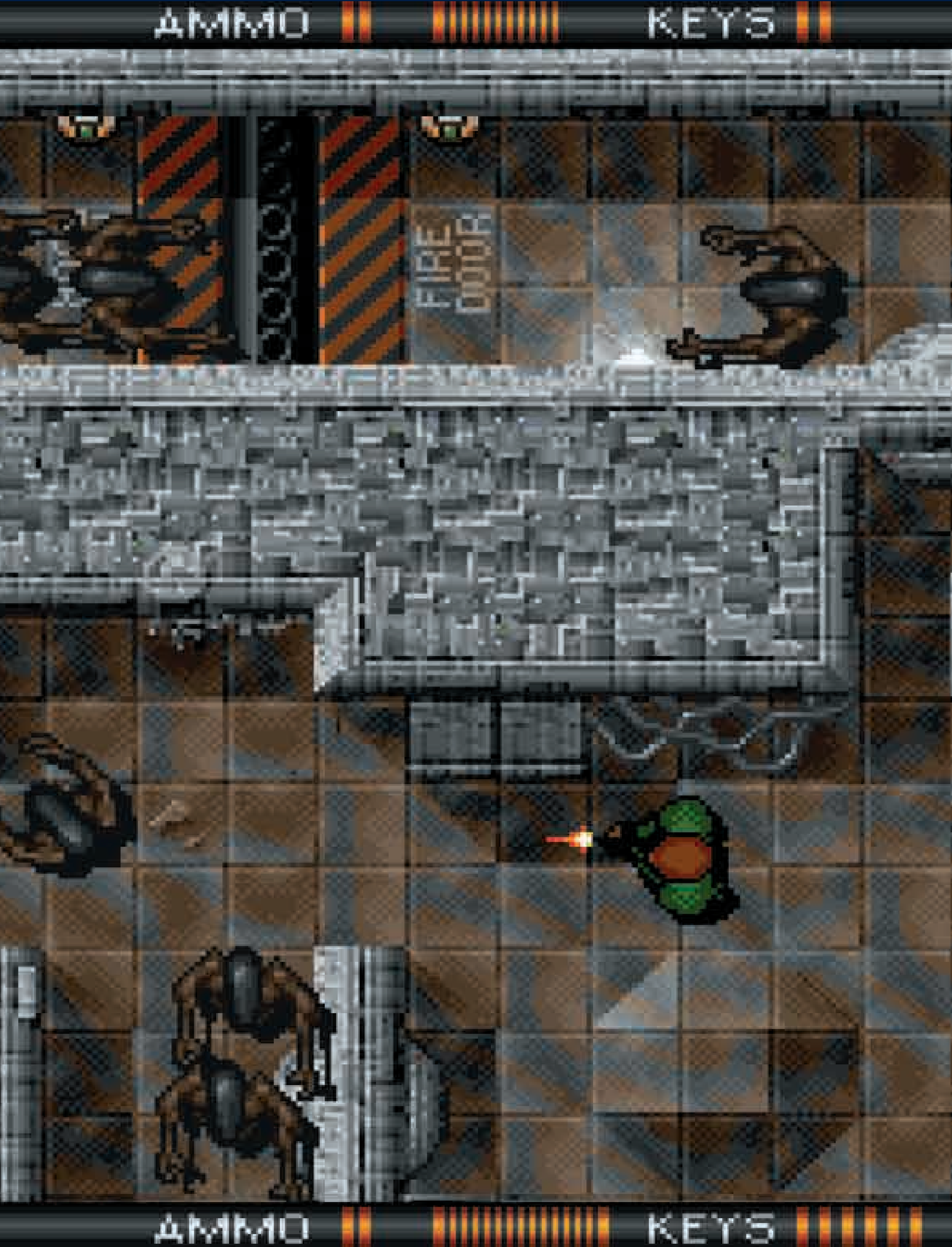
JUST LIKE



MARIO GOLF: TOADSTOOL TOUR



In space, no-one can hear you scream… **Alien Breed Amiga [Team 17] 1991**


AMMO
KEYS
FIRE DOOR
AMMO
KEYS


eMag



A PARAGON PUBLICATION
NO.22 SEPT 2004
00p
RETRO
MICRO GAMES ACTION
THE MONTHLY OLD-SCHOOL SOFTWARE REVIEW
PLUS
REVIEWS OF TORNADO LOW LEVEL, SWORD OF VERMILION AND AFTER BURNER, RETROSPECTIVE WITH THE PICKFORDS, ROM SERVICE, RETRO CONTACT, AND MUCH MORE!
FEUD
BROTHERLY LOVE FROM THE PICKFORDS
Rock Star Ate My Hamster
Codemasters goes all adult with an old rocker
SNES CLASSIC!
SUPER METROID
Is It The Greatest Retro Game Ever?
The History of Intellivision
We talk to a Blue Sky Ranger and rediscover Mattel's machine
CLASSIC MACHINE
PC ENGINE GT
One of the best handhelds ever created...

RETRO NEWS

Find out what's going on in the here and now of retro gaming…

Turn to the last page of this month's retro section and you'll find a new feature dedicated to you, the reader. Retro collecting is becoming increasingly popular and our first star has amassed an extremely impressive collection. Perhaps the retro bug is infectious, as I've redoubled my collecting efforts.

A few months ago, I was an average Joe who spent his spare time with a devoted wife and a beautiful daughter. Now, however, I've become a crazed beast who either paces impatiently while the latest eBay auction is ticking down, or scours every forum known to man in the hope of finding a retro bargain.

The most enjoyable part of collecting, though, is not the great bargains (though I've already bagged a few of those); no, it's the sheer nostalgia rush you get when you stumble upon a long-forgotten gem that's hidden among all the more well-known titles.

In essence, that's exactly how we see our retro section. Sure, we'll cater to all the classics, but every now and then we'll throw in a little curveball and treat you to something you might not have heard of. So for every *Super Metroid* we'll give you a *Shinrei Jusatsushi Taromaru*, or a *Tornado Low Level*. All this and you don't even have to get up at six on a Sunday morning to find the best bargains…

Darran Jones, Retro Editor

Midway's Next Treasure Chest

GET READY FOR ANOTHER SELECTION OF RETRO CLASSICS FROM MIDWAY

We all know that Midway is preparing to release its next volume in the *Arcade Treasures* series, but now we have the full line-up and it's looking pretty damn good. Due in the next few months, *Midway Arcade Treasures Volume 2* for Xbox, Cube and PS2 will include *APB, Arch Rivals, Championship Sprint, Cyber-Ball, Gauntlet 2, Hard Drivin', Mortal Kombats 1-3, Narc, Pit Fighter, Primal Rage, Rampage World Tour, SpyHunter 2, Steel Talons, S.T.U.N. Runner, Timber, Total Carnage, Wizard Of Wor, Xenophobe* and *Xybots*.

Despite a few duffers, *Arcade Treasures 2* looks set to pick up where the first volume left off. We spoke to Nathan Rose, executive producer of *Arcade Treasures 2*, to find out more about the series.

games™: How has the first *Treasures* disc been received?

NR: The response has been phenomenal. Mass-market consumers as well as hardcore gamers couldn't wait to get their hands on it.



▲ A *Mortal Kombat* frenzy is due on the PS2, Xboks and Kube.

games™: Can we play *Arcade Treasures 2* online?

NR: Sorry, but Live play won't be possible, although you'll still be able to post your high scores via Xbox Live. Unfortunately, it would take too much time and man power to re-engineer this classic code to allow online play.

games™: How do you go about deciding which games to include?

NR: We went through our classic library, cross-referenced that with the accessible archived code and came up with a top 40, then cut it down to our top 20.

games™: What's been the most requested game so far?

NR: There really hasn't been one solely requested game. For the most part, consumers are excited by several of the titles including, but not limited to, the *MK* series, *NARC*, *Cyberball 2072* and *Xenophobe*.

games™: One of our biggest concerns with *Arcade Treasures* was the unlimited continue system, as it devalued high scores. Could we have a single-credit system?

NR: The high-score table does take into account the number of continues used, so if you get a higher score with fewer continues, you'll win. With so many games in the compilation it would take forever to complete them with limited continues. Each game must be consistent with the others so if we gave some limited [continues], the others would need to be the same.

GOT A GRAND HANDY?

With retro gaming gaining momentum with the mainstream, it's unsurprising to hear that certain machines and games continue to rise in price at stores and online sites.

Every now and then, though, an ultra rare title comes along that creates the same sort of panic that was first seen when the Super NES launched in Japan. Last month, we were amazed to see a *NES 1990 Championship* cart sell for a not too shabby £1,206 on eBay. As impressive as this is, though, serious collectors were expecting it to go for even more.

The gold cartridge is one of 200 that were given out to winners (and some runners-up) of a Nintendo-organised competition that was held in America in 1990, though, according to the seller, only 26 are believed to be in circulation today. The cart contains three timed games – *Super Mario Bros., Rad Racer* and *Tetris* – though these are limited to a few levels each, rather than the whole game. And we thought the re-released NES Game Boy Advance games were expensive…

This Month In 1982

Coleco enters the gaming market...

GAMING NEWS SEPT '82

The boom before the breakdown

When the Connecticut Leather Company started supplying leather to shoemakers in 1932, few would have expected it to eventually enter the videogame market. As the years progressed, though, the renamed Coleco found itself dealing in plastics, swimming pools and other products, and by the end of the Seventies it was preparing to enter the rapidly expanding videogame market.

Released in 1982, the Colecovision immediately stood apart from Mattel's Intellivision and Atari's 2600 because of its superior aesthetics and accurate arcade conversions. Coleco scored another direct hit against its competitors by releasing the machine with the hugely popular *Donkey Kong*, with other arcade hits like *SpyHunter*, *Carnival* and *Zaxxon* quickly following. Indeed, such was the system's success that by 1983, it was beating both Mattel and Atari on sales and by the time of its untimely demise in 1984, it had sold over 6 million units.

After the videogame crash of the early Eighties, the rights for the Colecovision (and most of its remaining games) were quickly snapped up by Telegames and are still available for sale from www.telegames.co.uk as well as other retro gaming sites.

the CHARTS in Sept 1982

UK Music Charts

1 EYE OF THE TIGER	SURVIVOR
2 SAVE A PRAYER	DURAN DURAN
3 WALKING ON SUNSHINE	ROCKER'S REVENGE
4 PRIVATE INVESTIGATIONS	ALICE COOPER
5 COME ON EILEEN	DEXY'S MIDNIGHT RUNNERS
6 HIGH FIDELITY	KIDS FROM FAME
7 ALL OF MY HEART	ABC
8 GIVE ME YOUR HEART TONIGHT	SHAKIN' STEVENS
9 WHAT	SOFT CELL
10 THE MESSAGE	GRANDMASTER FLASH, MELLE MEL & THE FURIOUS FIVE

Intellivision games we were playing in 1982

1 STAR STRIKE	MATTEL ELECTRONICS
2 ATLANTIS	IMAGIC
3 BOMB SQUAD	MATTEL ELECTRONICS
4 CARNIVAL	COLECO
5 DONKEY KONG	COLECO
6 MICROSURGEON	IMAGIC
7 PITFALL	ACTIVISION
8 REVERSI	MATTEL
9 STAMPEDE	ACTIVISION
10 B-17 BOMBER	MATTEL ELECTRONICS

Last Month's Atari Lynx Screenshots

1ST ROW	2ND ROW	3RD ROW	4TH ROW	5TH ROW	6TH ROW	7TH ROW	8TH ROW
Alpine Games, APB, Awesome Golf, Basketbrawl, Batman Returns, Malibu Bikini Volleyball, Super Off-Road, Shanghai, Pounce, Road Riot 4WD	Block Out, Blue Lightning, Kung Food, Dracula The Undead, Eye Of The Beholder, Steel Talons, Ms. Pac-Man, Tournament Cyberball, Super Asteroids & Missile Command, Vindicators	Desert Strike, Lode Runner, Gordo 106, California Games, Double Dragon, Toki, RoadBlasters, Ninja Gaiden, Scrapyard Dog, Xybots	Bubble Trouble, Jimmy Connor's Tennis, GeoDuel, Lemmings, Cyber Virus: CinciClassic Edition, Robo Squash, Ninja Gaiden III: Ancient Ship Of Doom, Joust, Xenophobe, Zarlor Mercenary	Hard Drivin', BattleWheels, Battlezone 2000, Championship Rally, Crystal Mines II, Power Factor, Turbo Sub, Pac-Land, Ramparts, Robotron 2084	Hockey, European Soccer Challenge, Krazy Ace Miniature Golf, Electrocop, Dungeon Slayers, Remnant, Paperboy, Qix, Shadow Of The Beast, Warbirds	Checkered Flag, Fat Bobby, Fidelity Ultimate Chess Challenge, Lynx Casino, Loopz, Rygar, Todd's Adventures In Slime World, Pinball Jam, World Class Soccer, Gates Of Zendocon	S.T.U.N Runner, Pit Fighter, Viking Child, SFX, Rampage, Hydra, Switchblade II, Dirty Larry: Renegade Cop, Ishido: The Way Of The Stones, Chip's Challenge



Rising Sun Retro

The advent of 16-bit consoles opened up a world of import gaming, and one incentive was the ability to get hold of games that would never appear outside Japan. With this in mind, we're taking a look at the import classics that never got released in the UK. This month's title is a curious Saturn rarity…

S•H•I•N•R•E•I J•U•S•A•T•S•U•S•H•I T•A•R•O•M•A•R•U

Release: 1996
Format: Saturn
Publisher: Time Warner Interactive
Developer: In-House

Like *Radiant Silvergun, Shinrei Jusatsushi Taromaru* (or *Psychic Killer Taromaru* as it's more commonly known) is another expensive, desirable Saturn title. Unlike *Radiant Silvergun*, though, which always seems to be available from specialist websites, *Shinrei* is much rarer. Even if you do manage to find a copy, you'd better have deep pockets – a mint copy complete with spine can cost over £200. Fortunately, we've got hold of a copy from a friend of a friend of a friend, so now you can find out what this is about, and if it's worth buying…

No-one knows exactly how rare *Shinrei* is but it's estimated that Time Warner Interactive shipped no more than 7,500 units before the company was bought by Midway. Based on its extremely hard-to-find STV-Titan parent, *Shinrei* is an interesting title that mixes the likes of *Shinobi* with a more straightforward shoot-'em-up.

Controlling a ninja or a monk, the first thing you notice is the icon that floats in front of your character. Should an enemy appear, your icon instantly locks on to it, allowing you to unleash a deadly attack. It's an unusual system that shares many similarities with the Mega Drive's *Alisia Dragoon* and *Mystic Defender*, but inexperienced players often found themselves left open if an enemy managed to get between the icon and their character.

With no way of defending yourself from close attacks, the unskilled player would lose precious health before he could re-target. This has led to some unfair criticism of *Shinrei*'s clunky gameplay; but perseverance pays off and you soon get used to the controls.

With the gameplay mastered, you can soak up some of the most impressive bosses and effects seen on the Saturn. While the colours lack some of the brightness associated with SEGA's in-house titles, a few moments' play would reward you with some very impressive graphical tricks.

While *Shinrei* takes place on a typical 2D plane its backgrounds feature some impressive 3D effects; reach a certain point in a level and it will shift round to create a lovely impression of depth. A similar technique is used in various SNES Mode 7 titles, but this is one of the best examples we've seen.



DEEP POCKETS

Like many hard-to-find titles, *Shinrei Jusatsushi Taromaru*'s worth comes down to how much you're willing to spend. While it's rarely available on eBay, online importers such as www.videogameimports.com and www.videogamecentre.co.uk did have copies in stock last time we asked. Don't expect much change from £200, though. Although it's a lot of money to spend on one game, it's not the most expensive title we can think of, and if you're a hardcore Saturn collector you really need to try out this game as soon as possible.

Bosses share similar attributes and before long you'll have seen a deadly giant frog, a man who morphs into a sword-wielding monster, and a deadly snake that's reminiscent of the hammer and sickle-wielding boss in *Strider*.

Like *Radiant Silvergun*, the variety and graphical flair of *Shinrei*'s bosses led to rumours suggesting that ex-Treasure developers had been heavily involved in the game. Regardless of its origins, just a quick look at *Shinrei Jusatsushi Taromaru* is enough to make you realise that European gamers missed out on another classic.



▶ When *Silvergun* and *Shinobi* collide… *Shinrei* combines the best of both games with a hefty price tag.

GREAT GAME BOSSES



REVENGE OF SHINOBI

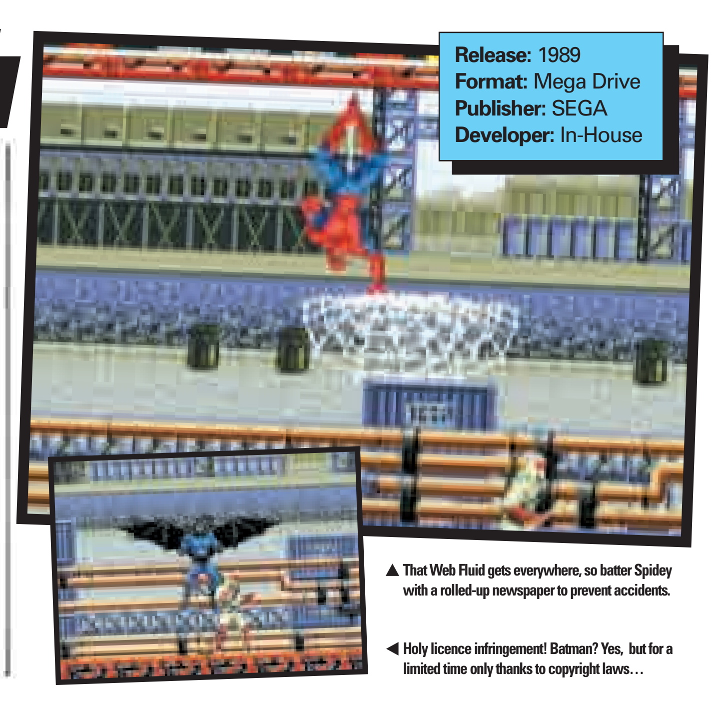
When SEGA's *Shinobi* sequel appeared, defeating superheroes was one of the last tasks that gamers expected to undertake. But once you'd made it to the end of level six, you'd face off against Marvel's amazing Spider-Man – boy, was he a pig to beat.

Crawling around at the top of the screen, the webbed wonder would fire three sticky nets towards your intrepid Ninja. While you were struggling to break free, Spidey would drop down and rob you of your much-needed energy. Hit him enough times (or better yet, use some potent Ninja magic) and the wall crawler would eventually concede defeat and disappear – and that's where things got interesting…

If you were lucky enough to have an early copy of the game, your next opponent would be none other than the Dark Knight himself, Batman. Apart from a devastating move that saw him rapidly fly from one side of the screen to the other, Bats was pretty easy to defeat.

As SEGA had failed to get the licensing rights for the Caped Crusader, in later games he was replaced by a nondescript winged demon, which, while identical in moves, was a major letdown after Spidey's dramatic entrance. So, how do you know if you have the rarer first version (and yes, we do know about Godzilla being replaced on level seven)? You'll just have to play the game and find out…

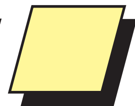
Release: 1989
Format: Mega Drive
Publisher: SEGA
Developer: In-House



▲ That Web Fluid gets everywhere, so batter Spidey with a rolled-up newspaper to prevent accidents.

◀ Holy licence infringement! Batman? Yes, but for a limited time only thanks to copyright laws…

GAMES THAT TIME FORGOT



ROCK STAR ATE MY HAMSTER

Release: 1989
Format: Various
Publisher: Codemasters
Developer: Colin Jones

No doubt wanting to move away from the many *Simulator* titles it had made, the release of *Rock Star Ate My Hamster* was a risky move for the Codies. No sooner had the title screen loaded than you were greeted by a hard rocker giving you the finger – this wasn't a game you played if your mother was around. This risqué humour continued throughout the game and was basically an excuse for Codemasters and programmer Colin Jones to take a few swipes at the pop industry.

Choosing from an impressive list of caricatured stars, *Rock Star* let you manage up to four musicians in your bid to become a hit and secure the number-one chart spot. Wacky Jacko, Iggy Carrust, Maradonna and Mince were just a few of the famous names to choose from and once your band was complete, you could put them to work to earn some cash. Helped by the gormless Clive, you could arrange publicity stunts, set up practice sessions and eventually play those all-important gigs and release (hopefully) chart-topping singles.



▲ Now you can 'be' Simon Cowell, though without the high waistband, bouffant hairdo and raging superiority complex.

Not a huge hit when it was released, revisiting *Rock Star* makes you realise just how limited it really was. Progress in the charts seemed entirely random and you'd often find your characters dying after one of Clive's stunts went wrong. Choices were often preordained too, so even if you turned down someone's request for bail, for instance, you'd end up paying anyway.

While there are plenty of classics that have been forgotten, *Rock Star* is perhaps best left behind.



Why Don't They Remake...

HE AIN'T HEAVY, HE'S MY MEDIEVAL SPELL-CASTING BROTHER

FEUD

Release: 1987
Format: Various Home Systems
Publisher: Bulldog
Developer: The Pickford Brothers

Sibling rivalry can be a terrible thing, but imagine the chaos that would ensue if the combatants were skilled wizards. Taking place in the sleepy village of Little Dullard, Ste and John Pickford's tale of brotherly hate saw Learic and Leanoric in a duel that could end with only one survivor.

Taking control of Learic, the main aim of *Feud* was to make your way through the expansive village and collect the ingredients needed to complete a range of potent spells. Each spell required two separate ingredients and with 12 different incantations to complete, you really had your work cut out.

Each of the spells was inscribed within your leather tome and a simple press of the space bar (together with left or right) enabled you to flick through the various pages and find out which spells needed completing. Once you'd managed to collect the right herbs, you needed to return to your trusty cauldron where you could concoct the potion, get ready to hunt down your wayward brother and then use some nasty spells on him.

Teleport, Sprites, Freeze, Invisible and Lightning were just a few of the charms on offer and the Pickfords ensured that there was a nice balance between offensive and defensive spells. Of course, the real genius of *Feud* was that while you were busy hunting for the necessary ingredients with which to slay your brother, your elder sibling was doing exactly the same. The result was a frantic battle that saw you racing through the detailed flick-screen environments in order to collect all the herbs before your brother.

A handy compass showed Leanoric's position at all times and things would get incredibly tense whenever he appeared on screen and started bombarding you with a barrage of deadly spells. Thankfully, Leanoric's spell book was exactly the same as your own, so at least you always had an idea of what to expect from your brother.

With bold, brightly coloured visuals (especially on the Amstrad version) *Feud* was a highly enjoyable title and was a fantastic debut for Mastertronic's new budget label, Bulldog. It received numerous awards (including the coveted Crash Smash on the Speccy) and enjoyed similar success on the Amstrad and C64 (though those versions weren't programmed by the Pickfords).

We're certain that with a bit of tweaking, a variation on the game would still work today. While it's far from original, we quite like the idea of racing around in the first-person perspective, spell book open in one hand and flinging around potions with the other. Of course, the game would feature a much larger range of incantations to collect and today's consoles would be able to generate some very impressive visuals (think *Hexen*, but with the *Doom 3* engine).

Failing that, you could move away from the brother-versus-brother idea and turn the game into a RTS where you're an overlord or god who must send out his followers to collect the relevant resources in order to defeat your opponent. Now, where's that Knap Weed?



▲ Finding mystical ingredients isn't easy at the best of times, so having your scheming brother after them too was inconvenient, to say the least.



▲ Chuck your collected ingredients into your cauldron to create some nifty potions. Gas mark 6 should do it.

STRANGE BEGINNINGS

Seeing that *Feud*'s battling brothers were created by two real-life siblings, you might think they'd have used their own scraps for the game's plot. As John Pickford explains, though, the idea stems from *Elite*. "There's this feeling you get at the end of a heated battle when there's only one enemy left and you're nearly dead," he says. "You're determined to take him out even though you're likely to die yourself. I wanted to recreate that emotion in a game." After replaying *Feud*, we'd say that he succeeded.

M•I•C•H•A•E•L J•A•C•K•S•O•N•S M•O•O•N•W•A•L•K•E•R

Michael Jackson has always been acclaimed for his nifty dance routines, but it wasn't until the release of *Moonwalker* on the Mega Drive that gamers found out how deadly his moves really were.

Loosely based on the rather dire film that came out in the same year, *Moonwalker* saw Jacko travelling through various levels in search of missing children (yes, we can appreciate the inappropriate irony). Being afraid of Michael, many of the kids were hard to find and much hunting around was required if you wished to proceed to the next stage to find the next set of hidden sprogs.

In order to ensure that Jacko didn't fulfil his task, Mr Big had sent out many minions to see that wacko Jacko had to prove just how 'bad' he really was. Armed with his fancy dance moves, Jackson quickly defeated his enemies and he could continue to poke around for those missing tykes. Ahem.

Once every child had been accounted for on each level, Bubbles leapt on to his master's shoulder and pointed the way to the stage's final showdown, which required you to be sure you had your dancing shoes ready. Jackson then found himself surrounded by countless enemies and the only way to defeat them was to, er, dance them to death. Yes, really.

Once enough of Jackson's musical magic had been unleashed, his opponents lined up and went through a choreographed dance routine. One quick 'ooh' and a raised arm from Michael later and his foes lay around him in exhausted defeat. As hilarious as this vision may be, it got even more amusing on later levels as Jacko's human opponents were replaced by zombies and, best of all, dogs. If the sight of a line of toe-tapping canines doesn't make you laugh out loud, you may want to check that you're not actually dead.

Format: **Mega Drive**
Release Date: **1990**
Publisher: **SEGA**
Developer: **In-House**

Another potential classic that never made it into the shops

ROBOTRON 2084

Format: Spectrum
Release: N/A
Publisher: Atarisoft
Developer: Paul Holmes

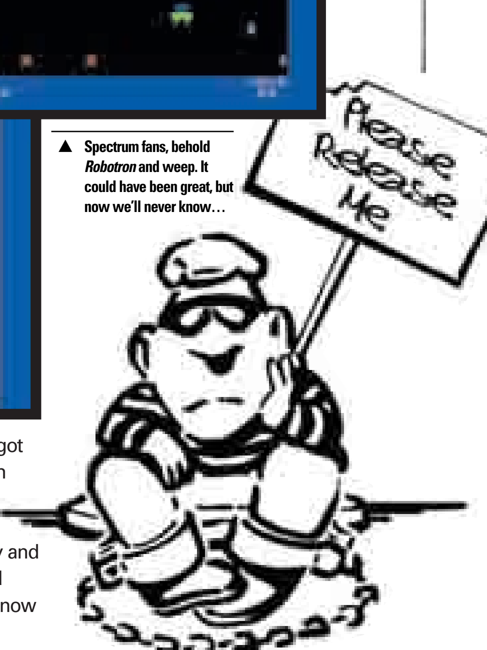
When it was announced that the classic *Robotron 2084* would be making its way to the humble Spectrum, many cynics argued that it simply wouldn't be possible and that Atarisoft would fail. Well, previews appeared (and even a review, although the game was unfinished) and the cynics were forced to eat their words, as *Robotron 2084* looked set to be one of the strongest arcade conversions that the Spectrum had ever seen.

Featuring a massive amount of on-screen sprites, some decent colour design and that familiar frantic gameplay (right down to replicating the arcade original's dual-joystick set-up) *Robotron*'s success seemed assured. But then disaster struck…

By the time *Robotron* – and the equally good *Moon Patrol* – were due for release, Atarisoft was in serious financial difficulties and, as a result, the general public never got to enjoy the two finest Spectrum games Atarisoft had produced.

Robotron 2084 and *Moon Patrol* never saw the light of day and to this day remain undiscovered gems… unless, of course, you know the right websites to visit.

▲ **Spectrum fans, behold *Robotron* and weep. It could have been great, but now we'll never know…**



ONE VISION

MATTEL'S INTELLIVISION MUST BE GAMING'S GREATEST UNSUNG HERO. IT SCALED THE HEIGHTS IN 1982, SURVIVED THE CRASH OF 1983, AND WAS ON THE SHELVES FOR OVER A DECADE. IT ALSO BOASTED A SECRETIVE BAND OF DEVELOPERS, THE BLUE SKY RANGERS. GAMES™ TRACKED DOWN FORMER RANGER KEITH ROBINSON TO FIND OUT WHAT MADE THE INTELLIVISION TICK, AND WHY IT'S STILL SO POPULAR...

WE LOOK BACK AT THE CONSOLE THAT REFUSED TO DIE

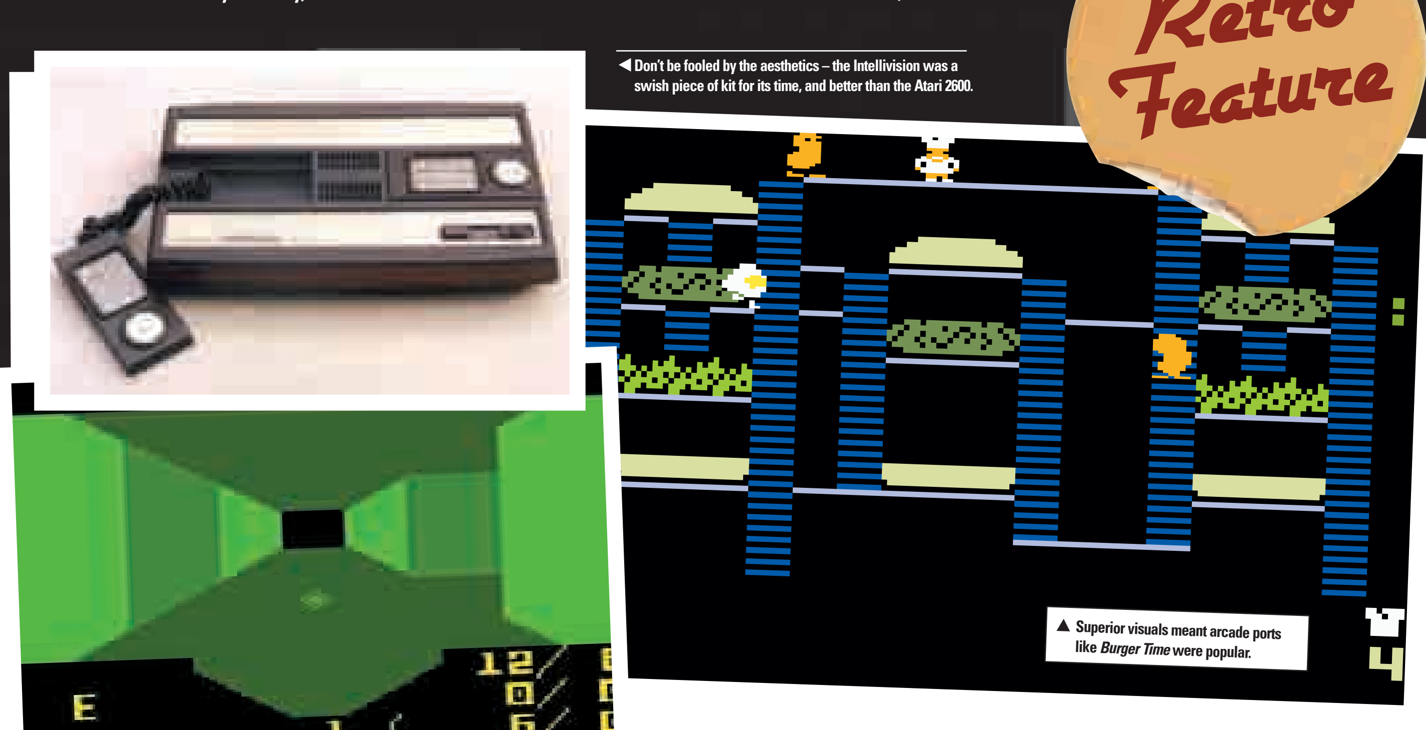
Think of gaming history and it's always the same names that spill from the lips of excited retro fans. Atari, SEGA, Sinclair and Nintendo are continually name-checked and while all have played important roles in gaming's chequered past, there are plenty of other companies who are worthy of recognition. Take Philips/Magnavox, for example – it was responsible for releasing the world's first gaming system, the Odyssey. Or what about Atari and the timeless *Pong*? And then there was Mattel…

Though predominantly associated with the toy industry, Mattel had seen Atari's success with the Atari 1200 and wanted a piece of the gaming action. Mattel Electronics had been formed in 1977 to create handheld games, and was set to work on what would become the Intellivision (short for 'intelligent television'). Engineering for the machine started in 1978; in 1979 the first machines were test marketed in Fresno, California and sold fairly well. Although only four games were available at the Intellivision's launch, the nationwide introduction of the machine in 1980 saw the line-up increase to 19 and as sales increased, Mattel hired developers to create in-house software.

The development staff were mostly young graduates, and even the managers were pretty youthful. Keith Robinson began work at Mattel Electronics as a programmer, but quickly rose through the ranks. "I programmed a game called *TRON Solar Sailor*, an Intellivoice title based on the movie *TRON*," he explains. "Right after I finished the game, I was promoted to management and got to oversee games like *Shark! Shark!*, *Thin Ice*, *Hover Force* and a lot of the graphic development of other titles. It was a great time and there was obviously a huge battle between Atari and ourselves." Indeed, such was the competition between the two firms that the Intellivision developers' identity was kept secret in case Atari tried to lure key staff away. The team instead became known as the Blue Sky Rangers, a suitably fanciful name for a boom time in the gaming industry.

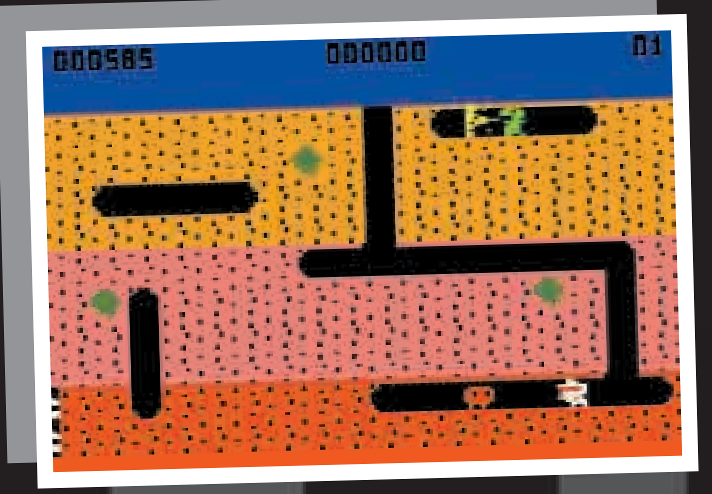
By the time Coleco's ColecoVision entered the market in 1982, the games industry was worth a staggering $1.5 billion, and

Retro Feature



◀ Don't be fooled by the aesthetics – the Intellivision was a swish piece of kit for its time, and better than the Atari 2600.

▲ Superior visuals meant arcade ports like *Burger Time* were popular.



▲ *Dig Dug* was programmed by Atari but was later released by INTV Corp when Atari closed down.

the Intellivision had successfully infiltrated over two million homes and boasted over 50 titles. Competition between the manufacturers intensified, and Mattel expanded the Blue Sky Rangers to a team of one hundred.

However, by the end of 1982 it was obvious that there wasn't enough room in the market to support three machines. Early in 1983 Atari and Mattel launched new systems, with Atari debuting its 5200 and Mattel unveiling the highly desirable Vectrex. The cheaper Intellivision II replaced the original Intellivision, and Mattel also revealed the ECS (Entertainment Computer System).

Despite a massive number of games being released for all three systems, quality was slipping and the cracks in the market were beginning to show. "It was the sheer glut of games that was really responsible for the crash of '83 and everything gaming related pretty much went away," recalls Robinson. "There was no control over what games came out. So many people came into the gaming industry, so many people were making games, and so many of them were low quality that no-one knew which were the good games and which were the bad games, so the people making the hardware weren't benefiting from all the games being sold."

By the end of the year, Mattel had laid off hundreds of staff and in January 1984, Mattel Electronics was closed down and the Blue Sky Rangers disbanded. But the Intellivision refused to die. "In the United States, the only machine that continued on was the Intellivision," Robinson explains. "Our senior vice president of marketing, T.E. Valeski, had purchased the rights off Mattel and continued to produce games using us freelancers, the programmers." INTV Corp (as the new company was christened) continued to sell the Intellivision and by Christmas that year, it was the only console on sale. Quick to reap the rewards of being the only machine on the market, INTV Corp released the INTV System III, which was essentially an upgraded Intellivision II.

With the worldwide release of the NES in 1986, INTV Corp debuted several Intellivision titles that had been finished by Mattel Electronics but never released. "Intellivision was kept going during the SEGA and Nintendo era with the last few games by Intellivision being produced at the end of 1989," Robinson says. "Intellivision pretty much covered the entire decade." By the end of the Eighties, however, INTV couldn't compete with the might of SEGA or Nintendo and closed in 1991, though games could still be bought via mail order. The Intellivision had been on sale for ten years, making it the longest commercially supported cartridge-based system in gaming history.

What next?

Despite no longer working on games for the Intellivision, Robinson decided to share his enthusiasm for the system with as many fans as possible. In 1995 he

VISIONS OF LOVELINESS

Intellivision Master Component
Released: 1980
Price: $300 (£164)

The Intellivision was launched in the US with *Las Vegas Poker & Blackjack*, *Math Fun*, *Backgammon* and *Armor Battle*, and was eventually released in both the UK and Europe. Mattel developed the Intellivision for several companies to sell under their own names, and as a result it has several different styles. From the launch, a keyboard add-on was promised that would turn the machine into a home computer. However, after three years of dithering, Mattel shelved the peripheral.

Intellivision II Master Component
Released: 1983
Price: $150 (£82)

Thanks to redesigned circuitry, the Intellivision II was a lot cheaper to produce than its predecessor and was supposed to be able to play all previous titles. When it was first released, however, gamers discovered that several Coleco titles refused to work on the new machine. Mattel suggested this was down to compatibility problems, but Intellivision Lives has revealed that a sub-routine was built into the Intellivision II that effectively rendered all non-Mattel Electronics titles obsolete. Cheeky.

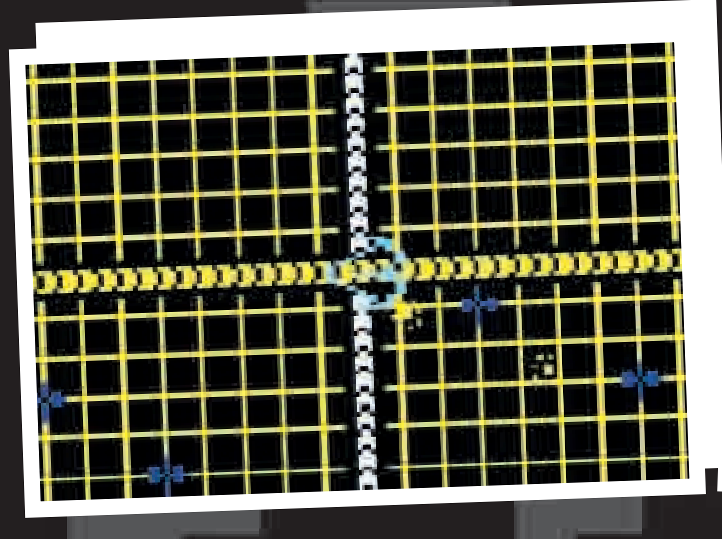
Entertainment Computer System (ECS)
Released: 1983
Price: $170 (£93)

As well as adding another three music channels to the Intellivision, the ECS was compatible with a music keyboard (although only one game was ever released for it). It appeared that the main reason for the ECS being created was due to the Federal Trade Commission discussing bringing fraud charges against Mattel for not releasing the keyboard for the original machine. The development teams were therefore told to build a new unit that would be able to perform all the functions of the keyboard.

Intellivision III Master Component
Released: N/A
Price: N/A

Although the Intellivision had superior graphics to the Atari 2600, the release of the ColecoVision in 1982 saw Mattel playing catch-up. It decided to create a third Intellivision unit that would offer serious competition on the visuals front and would also be backwards compatible (especially after Atari owners found out that their old games would not work on Atari's new 5200). Due to all the enhancements that were added to the machine, it suffered several delays and never got past the concept stage.







created a website (www.intellivisionlives.com) with another ex-Ranger, Steve Roney. They also formed a company, Intellivision Production, Inc, bought back the rights to all the Intellivision games, and in 1998 released a CD-ROM, *Intellivision Lives!*, containing old games and programmer interviews. In spite of Robinson and Roney's enthusiasm for the project, there were some concerns that *Intellivision Lives!* wouldn't be a success. "At the time, we marketed it ourselves as we went to various publishers and no-one was really interested in it," Robinson remembers. "But now, here we are a few years later and everyone is doing exactly the same thing."

With the likes of Namco and Midway dipping their toes in the reissue market, there's still plenty of interest in all things retro and as far as Robinson's concerned, it's all about the gameplay. "There's a huge amount of nostalgia around for these games at the moment," he explains, "and once gamers go back to them, they realise just how much fun they are to still play. The games of today are more of a long-term investment and can span over 40 hours, but in the old days you'd simply play against yourself or friends and see how far you could progress, or try and constantly beat your current score. It's a totally different experience; but it doesn't mean that one is better than the other. It's just that one has been neglected for such a long time. People rediscover these games, start thinking 'this is great' and get back into them again."

It's not just games that Robinson remembers fondly – the industry is a lot different now as well. "Back in the Eighties… it wasn't just 15-21 year-old males who played videogames – everyone did," he explains. "So we would make educational titles, children's games, games that we thought would appeal to men, games we thought would appeal to women and

MOVING UP THE RANKS

After *Intellivision Lives!* was a hit on the PC and Mac, it was released on the Xbox and PS2. However, as Robinson explains, running old games on a new console isn't that simple… "When we released our Xbox disc, Microsoft made us put a disclaimer on the front saying that these graphics were for old titles and not an indication of normal Xbox graphics. When we bought the games back onto PS2 and Xbox, in each case we created a user interface which was a 3D world… which effectively said 'okay, the PS2 and Xbox can actually do better than what you're going to play'."





IT'S ALL ABOUT THE EXTRAS

The various Intellivision units had numerous upgrades to ensure that gamers continued to find them exciting. The PlayCable module could be rented from local cable companies and allowed you to download Intellivision titles through the TV, while the Intellivoice added built-in speech synthesis. By far the most interesting add-on, however, was the System Changer that enabled you to play Atari 2600 games on your Intellivision. As a result, Mattel boasted that no home system could play as many games as the Intellivision. Imagine if someone tried that today…

IT'S READY WHEN IT'S READY

Early in the Intellivision's life, Mattel insisted that a keyboard would be added to the machine along with a range of edutainment software. As the keyboard failed to materialise, the add-on became something of a joke. Indeed, at Mattel Electronics' 1981 Christmas party, comedian Jay Leno said, "You know what the big three lies are, don't you? 'The cheque is in the mail', 'I'll still respect you in the morning' and 'the keyboard will be out in the spring'." The keyboard model was released to buy via mail order in 1982, but a general release never happened. The keyboard was canned in 1983.





OLD-SCHOOL OLD BOYS

After the closure of Mattel Electronics in 1984, the Blue Sky Rangers kept in touch with other, holding regular reunions. Many of them continued to work in the games industry and are still making games today. Former Ranger Don Daglow left to work for EA and founded Stormfront Studios in 1988. Stormfront is responsible for 1991's hugely successful *Neverwinter Nights*. David Warhol founded Realtime Associates in 1986 and, employing many ex-Rangers on a permanent or freelance basis, has produced titles for major publishers on every format from the Genesis to the PSone.

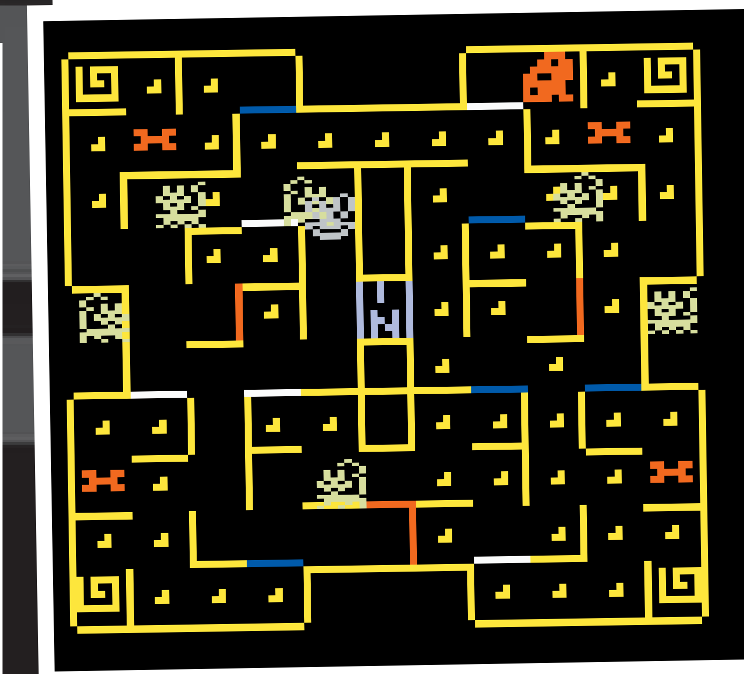
games we thought would appeal to parents. Nowadays, the marketing is pretty much focused on one specific market of dedicated gamers. Occasionally something original and innovative comes along, but the market does very well catering towards that young, teenage gamer."

There's also the bonus today of console manufacturers keeping an eye on who's producing the games for their machines. "Starting with Nintendo and continuing on with Sony, you have the control where they approve the concept, they license to you to be able to develop for it, they manufacture the disc or the cartridge, they check the quality before it goes out," Robinson says. "So now the consumer is assured of something that has quality control in it, the hardware manufacturer is assured of getting a return on its investment. The downside, though, is since these three companies are controlling everything that you can do on it, they can turn around and say 'no', and that might be to… very innovative games. But on the other hand you don't have another 1983-style crash."

Still playing…

Although he's extremely busy with Intellivision Production, Inc, Robinson still finds time to play plenty of games – although they're not always Intellivision titles. "I'm still guilty of playing *Tetris* on my Game Boy," he says. "I think that the cartridge has been in the machine for so long now that it probably won't ever come out. I'm also playing a lot of the original *Centipede* on my PlayStation. I don't really tend to play on the newer machines, but now that the online side is developing I may have to look into it, as I think that's where a lot of the fun is going to be in the future. The ability to trash-talk someone on the other side of the world while you're playing a game is a brilliant innovation, because there's always been that reputation of videogames being a solitary experience and it's now a very social community."

It's clear that Robinson will be happy with the new breed of games as well as Intellivision classics. But with emulated software becoming so popular, the real question is if anyone will still be using the original hardware in another 20 years. "If the consoles last, you'll be playing on them," Robinson predicts. "Otherwise you'll have them on whatever platform is currently available; so even if you're playing on your PlayStation47, we're sure you'll be able to play our games still. It's like the film industry – people always want to see the latest movies, but now DVD has come along they're returning to the old classics and TV series. There are always people who are going to remember when they were seven years old and had an Intellivision under the Christmas tree and they played it against their brother and parents – that's going to bring back a lot of happy memories for them." And you can't ask for much more than that.



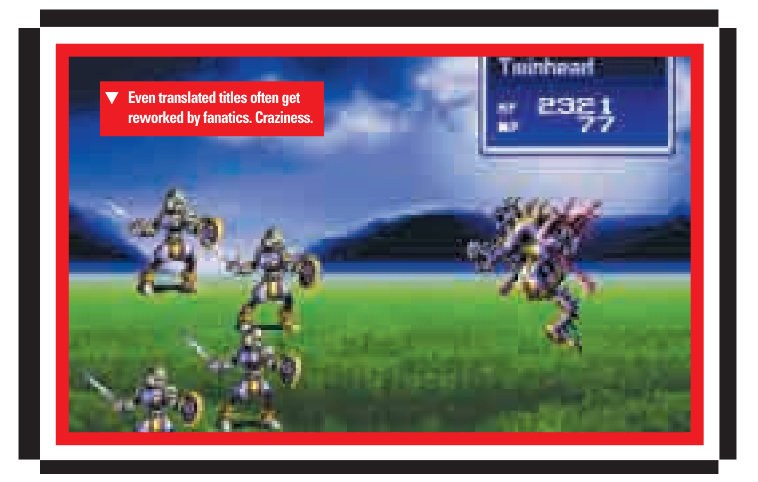
▲ Despite the simplistic visuals, the gameplay still stands up today.



▼ Mattel's advertising compared the power of the Intellivision and Atari 2600.



EACH MONTH, GAMES™ TAKES A LOOK AT THE STATE OF THE EMULATION SCENE. THIS MONTH, A FEW DEDICATED PEOPLE OPEN UP A WHOLE COLLECTION OF GAMES THAT MIGHT NOT USUALLY BE PLAYABLE FOR US PAL GAMERS...



▼ Even translated titles often get reworked by fanatics. Craziness.

ROM SERVICE

What with Japan being the home of many fine games, it's no surprise to hear that there are hundreds upon thousands of titles that don't make it to the UK, let alone get translated into our native tongue. What's more surprising is that there are those out there willing to commit massive chunks of their life to simply translating these otherwise lost gems for the world to enjoy.

Primary targets for translation tend to be the biggest games of yesteryear, titles that would never have been released in English, and new Game Boy titles – the easiest current format to work with in this way. That said, there have been some pretty nifty translations on the PS2, most notably the *Winning Eleven* patches that not only make menus much easier to navigate but also update kits, rosters and teams.

It's not just a Japanese thing, either – this works both ways. Where huge RPGs and the like may not be cost effective to translate into numerous tongues for the European launch, our Continental neighbours are often left in the lurch if their English isn't up to scratch. But scour the net and you'll dig up all manner of games that have been translated into French, German and Spanish. We've heard several complaints that official translations are often lacklustre affairs – something many gamers are more aware of than the cheaper developers and publishers out there may believe – and these unofficial versions seem to be doing a great job instead.

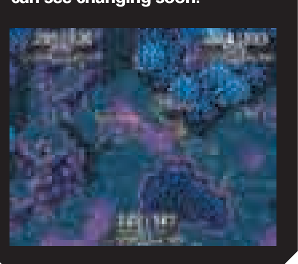
With many practical menu translations popping up on forums and websites within days of a game's release, it's not often that the translation elves get to tuck into a new project these days. Thankfully, there are so many older titles waiting to be made playable for new markets that – legal or not – this trend won't be dying out in a hurry.



▲ For fiscal reasons, *Unlimited SaGa* was only translated into English. As if it wasn't confusing enough…

LEGAL SCHMEGAL

As useful as many of these translations and patches may be, applying them to a ROM image is every bit as illegal as ownership of the ROM in the first place. This is because it constitutes modification of a copyrighted work, and even though most translations are distributed freely, it's their association with unlawful ROM usage that's seen as deeply evil. Obviously, this can leave die-hard gamers in a quandary – even if, for argument's sake, you own a Japanese copy of *Seiken Densetsu 3*, it's still illegal for you to download a ROM and patch it – a feat that would allow you to fully enjoy a game for which you've forked out big money. An odd state of affairs, indeed, but in today's piracy-laced industry, it's not one we can see changing soon.





TORNADO LOW LEVEL (Spectrum 48K) Vortex Software, 1984 – UK Advertisement



PC Engine GT

Classic Machine

QUITE POSSIBLY ONE OF THE BEST HANDHELD CONSOLES EVER MADE

Retro regulars will already be aware of our love for NEC's fantastic PC Engine. Released in 1987, it's one of the most impressive consoles of its time, with many of its games still enjoyable today. It was also a technically accomplished beast that was all the more impressive because of its diminutive size. With the arrival of the Game Boy and Lynx in 1989, NEC was determined not to miss out on the rapidly expanding handheld market and set to work on its own portable marvel – the PC Engine GT.

When it launched in 1990, the PC Engine GT had one of the most impressive ranges of games for any new machine. How? NEC had ensured that the GT would be compatible with practically every previous (and future) PC Engine title. Straight away, lucky GT owners were able to sample the delights of *Alien Crush, PC Kid, Son Son II, Atomic Robo Kid, Gunhed, Dragon Spirit* and many more, with the machine immediately gaining a very strong following in Japan.

As with Atari's Lynx and SEGA's Game Gear, NEC put a full colour screen and backlight in its handheld to really show off its games. In fact, the design of the GT's impressive screen was similar to the handheld TVs of the time and it even had its own cathode ray tube. What really set the machine apart from its peers though was the clarity of its dot matrix screen, and the fact that it hardly ever suffered from the motion blur that plagued its rivals. Of all the early colour handhelds (including SEGA's impressive Nomad), the PC Engine GT's visuals still stand up well today.

Another nifty feature of the GT was its ability to be used as a portable television, although this only worked in NTSC regions. The TV tuner extension made a bulky machine even bigger, but once again proved just how advanced the unit was for its time and it was soon copied by SEGA.

Of course, the GT was far from perfect and if you were able to overcome your initial awe at this technically amazing machine, there were a few flaws. The biggest problem was the GT's screen; it wasn't able to display the same resolution as the original PC Engine, so text and scores could be extremely hard to read. The Tri-format pixel layout also meant that scrolling titles would sometimes feature a strange shimmering effect. Still, in some ways the low resolution actually ended up helping certain titles, with games like *After Burner* and *Powerdrift* looking better than their large-screen counterparts.

Whichever way you looked at it, the GT was leagues ahead of the competition, so it was unsurprising that it was eventually launched in America. Unfortunately for NEC, the Turbo Express (as it was known in the US) found itself up against some stiff



CARD SHARP

The PC Engine GT's Hu-cards may have been tiny, but contained surprisingly complex games in their flimsy innards.

EYE EYE

This is one of the best handheld screens that we've seen – the fact it's recessed keeps it safe from knocks, but older GTs can have dead pixels.



SHOOT!

One very handy feature of the GT was the ability to use auto-fire. This made shoot-'em-ups much easier.

SPECIFICATIONS

PROCESSOR: HuC6280
PROCESSOR SPEED: 7.195090 MHz
SOUND: Stereo-capable, six channels
RAM: 64kb
DISPLAY: 2.6-inch backlit panel
RESOLUTION: 256 x 256 pixels
MAXIMUM SPRITES: 64
COLOR: 256 on-screen out of 512 palette
MEDIA: HuCard – TurboChip
POWER: Six AA batteries (150 mins)

Although it boasted an impressive collection of shoot-'em-ups, the PC Engine GT had a range of games. Its compatibility with the PC Engine ensured a steady stream of titles.

BUYER BEWARE

If you fancy picking up one of these beauties, be sure to pay great attention to the unit's condition. Sadly, time has not been kind to NEC's machine and you'll often find that screens suffer from a few dead pixels. Fortunately, scratches are normally kept to a minimum – NEC was smart enough to give the GT a recessed screen – but it never hurts to ask the seller to have a really close look. Another problem with the majority of GTs is that they often suffer from extremely quiet sound, although this is normally fine if using headphones. It always pays to find out as much as you can about a potential purchase, but in the case of the GT and Turbo Express, you need to be extra careful…

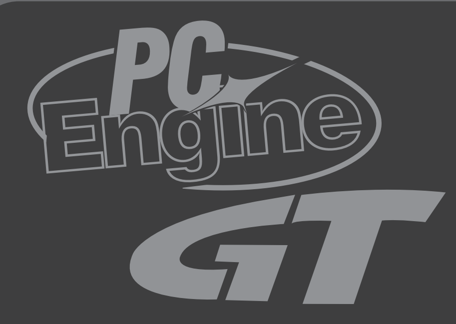
competition, and it wasn't helped by its $299 price tag that immediately put it out of reach of all but the most hardcore gamers. Add to this the limited number of games that had made it to the States and the Turbo Express found itself adrift. While it was possible to buy converters that enabled you to play Japanese imports, they tended to break easily and, nowadays, can be very expensive.

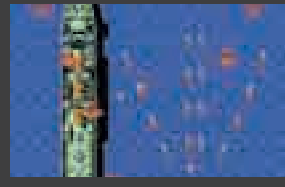
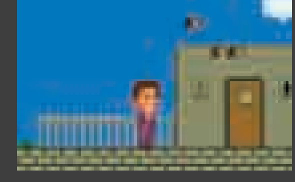
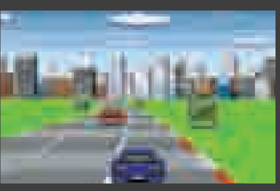
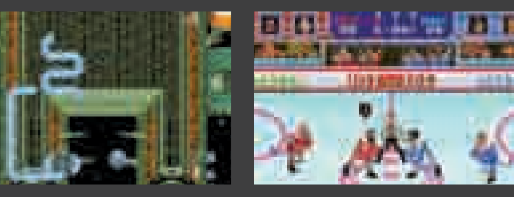
Despite its few niggles, both the PC Engine GT and (to a lesser extent) Turbo Express have become highly desirable collector's pieces and you'll often find them on eBay. Like many classic machines, though, you can expect to pay a reasonable amount for the pleasure of owning one, especially if you're lucky enough to find one that's mint in the box. It might not have been as flawless as people remember, but in our minds the PC Engine GT still runs a very close second to the Game Boy Advance in the 'best handheld' stakes. Not bad for a system that's over 13 years old…

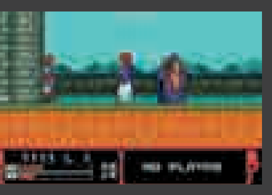
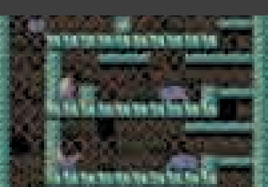
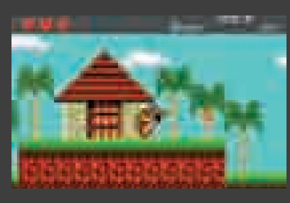
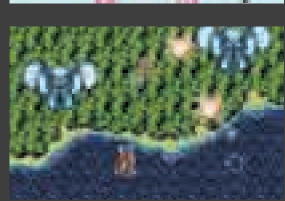
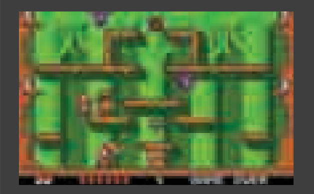
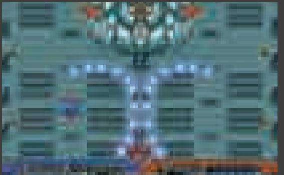
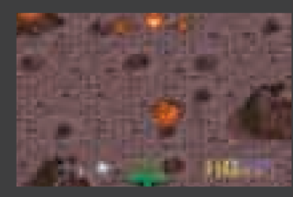
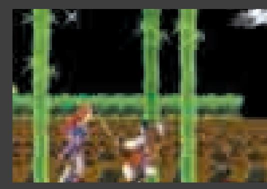
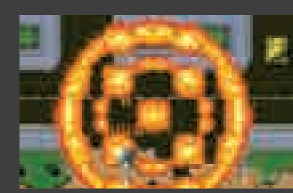
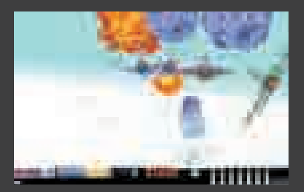
WHY I LOVE MY PC ENGINE GT

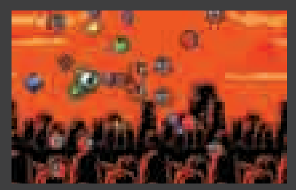
Sure, it was hideously expensive, but when you got that massive hunk of plastic in your hands, it just felt so right. Even after all these years, it's still an amazing piece of kit and it's a great pity that it never performed as well as it could have. Just imagine what the GT could have achieved if it had the SEGA or Nintendo name attached to it… It may eat batteries like there's no tomorrow (and it's not always easy to make out text) but as far as handhelds of yesteryear are concerned, the GT is king.

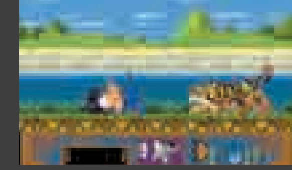
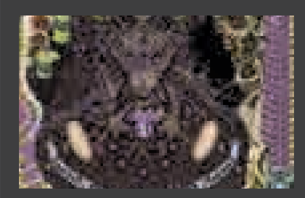
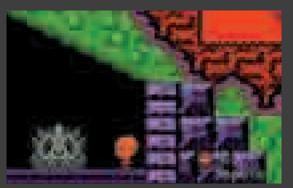
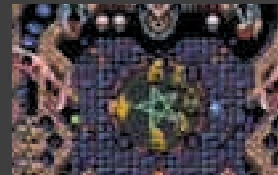
DARRAN JONES

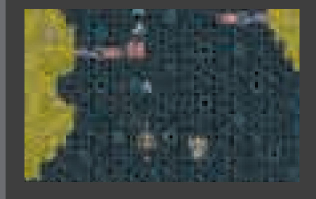

PC Engine
GT

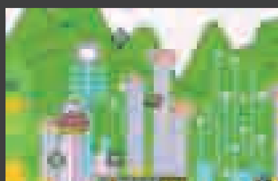





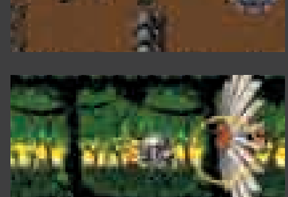
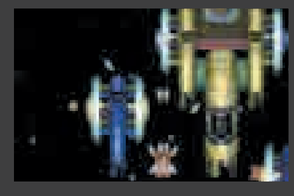











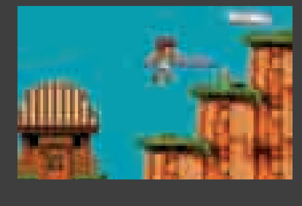


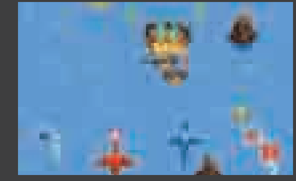





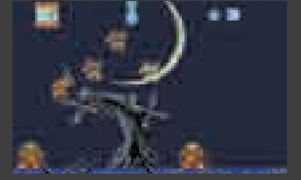




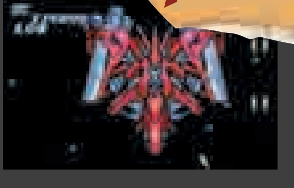
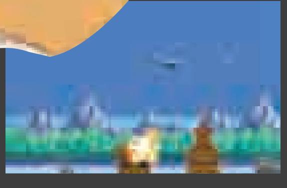
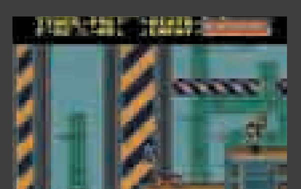
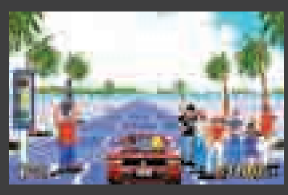



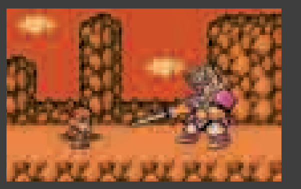
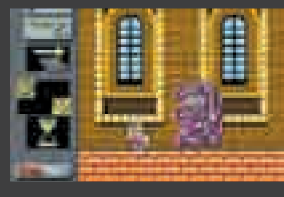
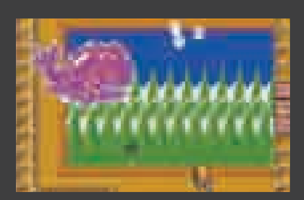
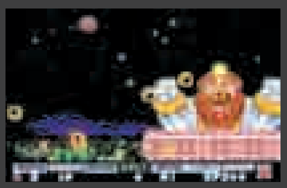


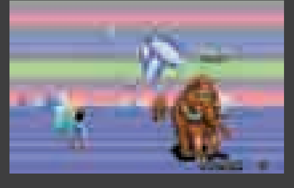

II I

Classic Machine

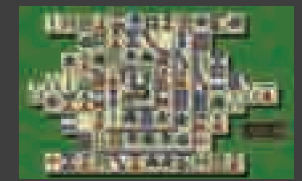
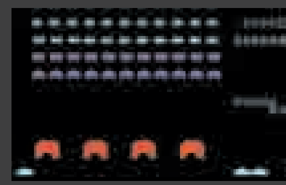


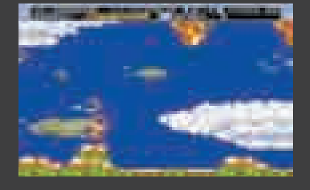






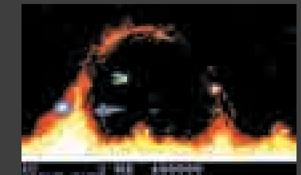
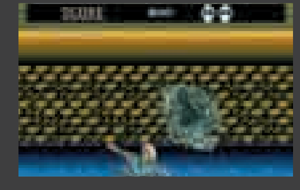
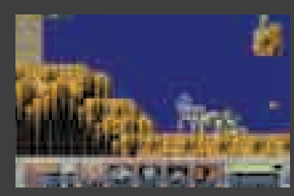
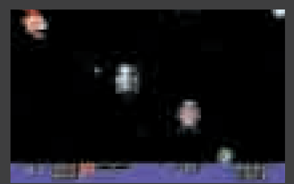
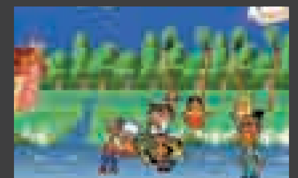
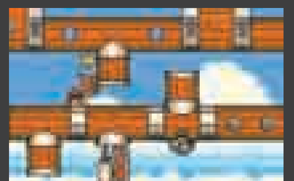
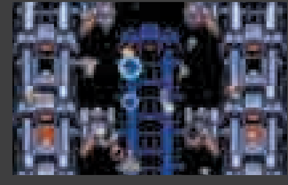
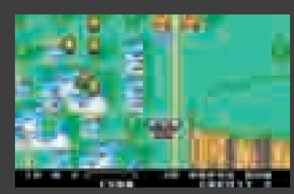
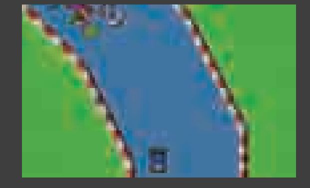
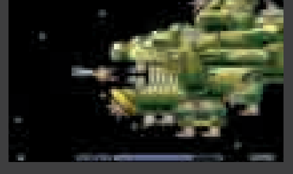





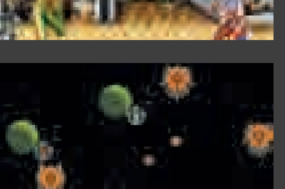
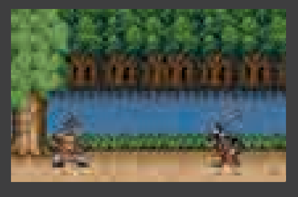




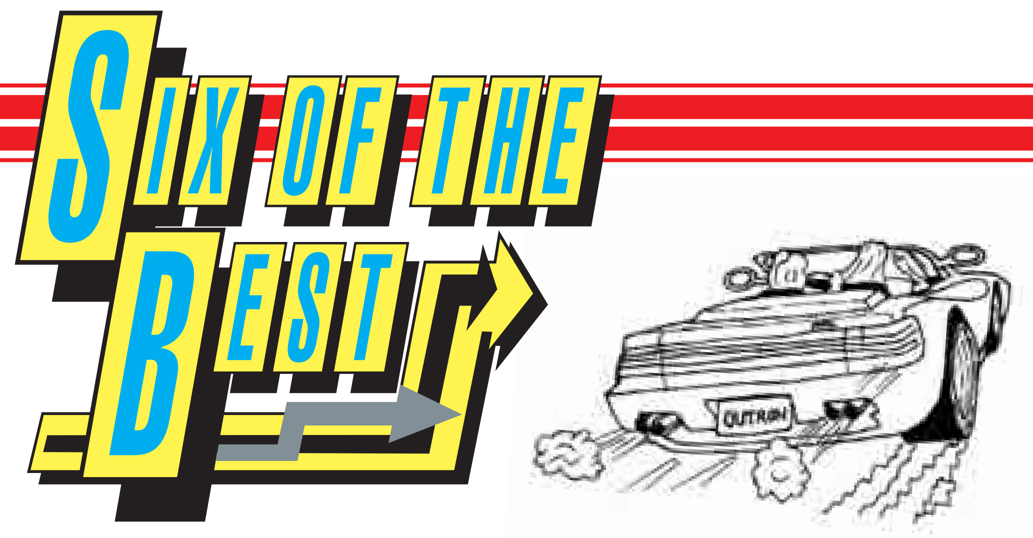






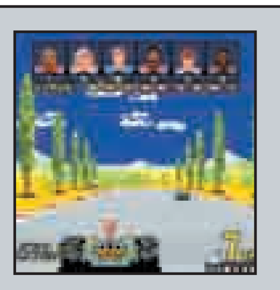


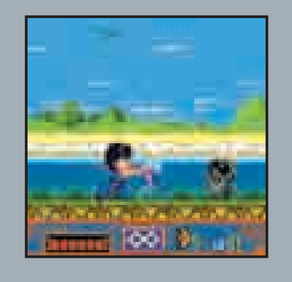
ONE OF THE GREATEST BENEFITS OF THE PC ENGINE GT WAS THAT MANY OF THE GAMES LOOKED A LOT BETTER ON ITS SMALL SCREEN THAN THEY DID ON A STANDARD TV. IF YOU WANT PROOF, CHECK OUT THIS LOT...

Power Drift

Developer: Asmic/SEGA
Year: 1990

Play this on a PC Engine and it's hard to see what all the fuss is about. See it on the small screen, however, and *Power Drift* suddenly becomes one of the PC Engine's greatest racers. The visuals are incredibly sharp and vibrant, and this is a thorough conversion of SEGA's fun (but by no means classic) racer. If you're looking for something a bit different, you really can't go wrong with *Power Drift*.





Kyukyoku Tiger

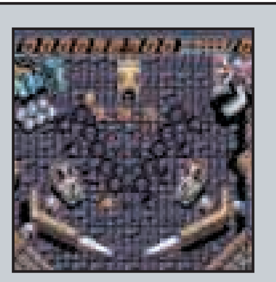
Developer: Taito
Year: 1989

Shmups are ten a penny on the PC Engine and while many gamers would choose *Gunhed, Dragon Spirit* and *Super Star Soldier, Kyukyoku Tiger* is well worth tracking down. Not only is it another superb conversion of a classic arcade game, it's also one of the finest Hu-card blasters available. Although the visuals are fairly basic, the hectic gameplay will really get your adrenaline going.

Devil Crash

Developer: Naxat Soft
Year: 1990

Yes, we know we covered this in the PC Engine Six Of The Best, but *Devil Crash* deserves all the credit it can muster. Visuals are incredibly crisp and you'll soon become totally absorbed as you try to achieve that all-important number-one placement. Like many fast-moving games, *Devil Crash* suffered from some slight motion blur, but if you were looking for one of the best handheld pinball games, this was the business.



Jackie Chan Action Kung Fu

Developer: Hudson Soft
Year: 1991

If you're a fan of Jackie Chan, or great platformers, you might want to check this out. Jackie looks fantastic as he fights through some glorious-looking levels that are packed with enemies. There's a nice variety of platforming and fighting to keep fans of both genres happy and the difficulty curve is fair. You'd be lucky to find it for under £30, though.



OutRun

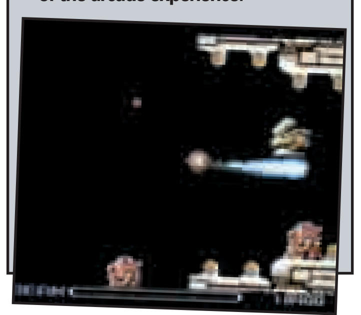
Developer: NEC Avenue/SEGA
Year: 1990

Before the Saturn and Dreamcast versions arrived, this was by far the best conversion of *OutRun*. Despite missing a few features from its arcade parent (namely the water from Coconut Beach) this was a stunning racer and did the PC Engine proud. Once it was shrunk down to the GT's tiny screen, the game looked even better. The tiny screen often made it hard to read your score, but this was a small price to pay for being able to play a faithful conversion of Yu Suzuki's classic racer in the palm of your hand.

R-Type 1+2

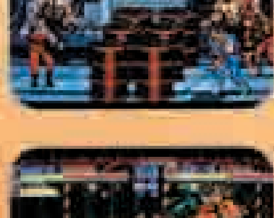
Developer: Hudson Soft/Irem
Year: 1988

Like *Devil Crash*, we've already covered *R-Type*, but playing it on the GT is an utterly enjoyable experience. Considering the size of the display, there's no problem dodging bullets, and the many key elements (like the gigantic mothership) look better than ever. Although it's a pain that you need to buy two Hu cards to get the full *R-Type* experience, this really is a class blaster. While the Game Boy had its own impressive version of *R-Type*, you need to play this on a GT for a perfect handheld replica of the arcade experience.



In Final Fight™ They're Serving Cocktails. Molotov Cocktails.

Those creeps! The Mad Gear Gang has kidnapped Haggar's daughter, Jessica. Now, you must head to the streets for the Final Fight. Use your fists and feet, as well as knives and Molotov Cocktails to beat the gang. Trust no one. Even the cops have gone bad!





Players will welcome the return of Haggar, the original Street Fighter

Two-player interactive

Spectacular graphics, thanks to Capcom's CPS super chip

Final Fight has "the cool Factor." Players will love the non-stop action!

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FINAL FIGHT (Arcade) Capcom, 1989 – Original US Arcade Flyer





▲ Four enemies, one statue – if you want to reach Mother Brain's secret lair, you had your work cut out…

Format: SNES
Release: 1994
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: In-House

There's a theory that talent skips a generation, and after the lack of a true *Metroid* title on the N64 and the glorious rebirth of the franchise on the GameCube, it's an idea we'd have to agree with. Samus Aran had already proved herself on the NES but the release of the SNES' *Super Metroid* really allowed Gunpei Yokoi and his development team to show her off to a receptive crowd.

Following on from *Metroid 2*, *Super Metroid* saw Samus retrieving the only surviving Metroid larva and taking it to a nearby space station. No sooner had she left the station though, she received a distress call and returned to find everything in chaos. Right from the off, *Super Metroid* was steeped in atmosphere and featured one of the most tense soundtracks ever heard on the SNES. As you gingerly made your way past the station's dead scientists, the lack of music heightened the drama superbly; machinery ominously hummed, while you were dogged by the sound of your own hollow footsteps. When you arrived at your destination in time to see Ridley blast off and start the

▼ *Super Metroid* looked great, but it sounded even better. You'll just have to hum to re-create the music here…

Greatest RETRO Game Ever



Samus Aran may be in her prime on the GameCube, but we remember when she was super on the SNES…

station's self-destruct mechanism, music welled up, sirens blared and the drama got turned up to 11; it was a masterful stroke and really showed how sound can enhance gameplay.

After escaping from the stricken station, you returned to the planet Zebes with the intention of putting a stop to the Metroid threat once and for all. Arriving on the rain-pelted planet, you were restricted to a few small locations to explore. As with the game's predecessors, however, power-ups opened up new sections of the massive world.

Samus' Power Suit was woefully underpowered to begin with, but before long you regained your Morph Ball ability, were able to fire various types of missiles and could even increase the height of your jumps. Each ability opened up more of Zebes' secrets and you'd be in awe of the game's sheer scale and unique level design. Every time it looked like you'd reached an impasse, some careful backtracking, intensive searching or logical thinking would reveal your next destination. This was no more apparent than with the game's doors. While they could be opened with your standard cannon, later doors had to be opened with other weapons, with certain stages requiring you to upgrade your Suit in order to withstand extreme heat and gravity.

The beauty of *Super Metroid*, however, was that you never felt forced along a linear path – there was always plenty to do and this non-linearity meant that discovering Zebes' many secrets was extremely fulfilling.

Perhaps one of the most impressive aspects of *Super Metroid* was Samus herself. Wrapped in her funky yellow Power Suit, she cut a striking figure as she made her way through the game; naturally athletic, the continual augmentation of her Suit took her to even higher levels of fitness. This was vital, as negotiating Zebes' landscape wasn't an easy task – lava pools, disappearing platforms and hard-to-reach ledges were just a few of the game's hazards, and skilful manipulation was needed to get the most out of the female bounty hunter.

Add a menagerie of fearsome foes and Samus' task became a lot harder – fortunately, her Suit would always provide a solution for dealing with even the most persistent enemies, but they were nothing compared to the game's bosses. From your first encounter with Ridley to the surprise reappearance of a (newly giant) Metroid at the end of the game, every boss battle in *Super Metroid* was wonderfully paced and packed with action. One of the highlights was undoubtedly meeting Kraid – two screens high, he was absolutely huge and really showed off the SNES' capabilities. Indeed, despite a few drab locations, *Super Metroid* was awash with nifty effects and looked extremely cutting-edge when it appeared in 1994. Even now, it's a very competent-looking title and it's testament to the developers that there are very few graphical differences between the SNES and current GBA iterations.

For all its graphical prowess, however, it's the superb music by Hiroo Tanaka, Kenshi Yamamoto and Minako Hamano that distinguishes *Super Metroid* without a doubt. Sometimes oppressive, often uplifting and always dramatic, few soundtracks on the SNES have sounded so good.

With the amount of acclaim that has been showered upon this title over the years it's perhaps not surprising that Nintendo waited so long before releasing *Metroid Fusion*. Maybe skipping the N64 was a good move after all…

"LOOK AT THE SIZE OF THAT THING"

Few gamers could miss *Super Metroid* when they walked into their local games shop, as its box was absolutely massive and stood apart from the other SNES titles with which it shared shelf space. The reason for this oversize piece of cardboard? Simple, *Super Metroid* came complete with its own walkthrough guide (and a hiked-up price to boot). Unsurprisingly, mint copies on eBay are far from cheap.



THE NEED FOR SPEED

If you wanted further proof as to how tightly designed *Super Metroid's* levels were, you only need to head over to sites such as www.classicgaming.com/msr/. Skilled players have got the game down to a fine art and can now complete it in under an hour and a half. It's even possible to download a video and watch the masters in action. Truly impressive…

Presentation: From the packaging to the title screen, *Super Metroid* exudes quality	**91%**
Graphics One of the most impressive-looking SNES games we've ever seen	**93%**
Sound Absolutely superb. It creates some wonderful atmosphere	**96%**
Gameplay Wonderfully paced – the gameplay is irresistible	**95%**
Longevity Once you've finished, try getting the other two endings…	**91%**
OVERALL	**95%**



WE'VE PUT ON OUR PATENTED TIME-TRAVEL HAT IN ORDER TO GO BACK A FEW YEARS AND REVIEW SOME CLASSIC GAMES AS IF THEY WERE FRESH FROM THE FACTORY…

SWORD OF VERMILION

We'll be the first to admit that *Sword Of Vermilion*'s story is a tale that's been told many, many times before. Discovering your father on his deathbed, you're told that you are, in fact, the son of a king and must now reclaim your lost inheritance (now there's a surprise).

While the story sounds clichéd, SEGA has ensured that the gameplay is anything but, and has added quite a few elements to make *Sword Of Vermilion* stand apart from the RPG crowd. As you start off, this looks like any other RPG and you'll find yourself getting rather bored as you talk to the many local villagers. Once you start your journey, however, things pick up remarkably and show just how much thought SEGA has put into its latest title.

Your travels take place in a separate window that creates the impression of moving through various environments and really helps to convince you that you're travelling from town to town. In a nice touch, your view of your surroundings is initially hindered until you've found the map of your current location, so it's quite easy to accidentally re-cover old ground.

Of course, there are plenty of encounters along the way and rather than the traditional turn-based battles, you'll find yourself able to hack up your enemies in real time. It's a great touch and really adds to the atmosphere. As your adventure progresses, you'll encounter new towns, plenty of magic and some

Format: Mega Drive
Release: 1989
Publisher: SEGA
Developer: In-House
Price: £35

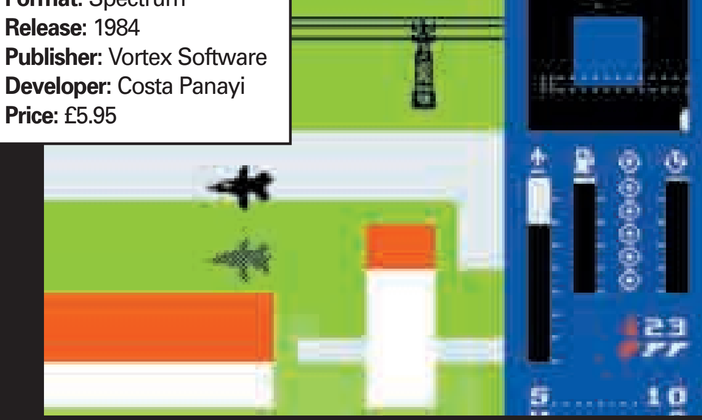
In Retrospect

There's no denying that a lot of *Vermilion*'s magic has been lost, and compared to the likes of *Chrono Trigger* and *Secret Of Mana*, *Vermilion* now looks mighty tired. Although the bosses are still impressive to look at (albeit with little or no animation) the overall look of *Vermilion* is beginning to feel old. Thank God the music is still as good as it ever was…

ELLIOT Combine infuriatingly addictive gameplay with music that you can't help humming along to and you have *Sword Of Vermilion*. It's an RPG that you just can't stop playing, even when you realise that you've waded through three screens of long grass riddled with monsters, only to find that you've forgotten your candles for cave exploration. Frustration sets in but you brush it aside and put on a determined face. There are rings to be found and monsters to be slain. Nothing can stop your quest for good. Possibly, just possibly, your tired eyes and aching fingers may be torn away from the game with the start of a third world war. But probably not.

TORNADO LOW LEVEL

Format: Spectrum
Release: 1984
Publisher: Vortex Software
Developer: Costa Panayi
Price: £5.95



When *Tornado Low Level* was announced, we'll admit to being somewhat sceptical about Vortex Software's grand claims. Now that we've actually had a chance to play *T.L.L.*, however, it's safe to say that we're very pleasantly surprised.

Taking control of the titular Tornado, the aim of each mission is to seek out and destroy six enemy installations (thoughtfully marked out as small circles) that are scattered throughout the game's heavily populated levels. There are plenty of objects to avoid and you'll need a cool nerve and some amazing reactions if you want to see *Tornado Low Level* through to the bitter end.

After impressing gamers with *Android 1* and *2*, Costa Panayi has delivered yet another gorgeous game that's filled with some of the

In Retrospect

It's easy to see how *Tornado Low Level* wowed a generation of Spectrum owners when it first appeared. Your plane is still surprisingly responsive, and while several flaws are apparent, it's stood the test of time and deserves a replay, if only so you can see that amazing scrolling again.

DARRAN Wow, Vortex Software has created one slick-looking game and while it's rather hard, this is a solid title. I love the way you can fly underneath telegraph wires, and great care needs to be taken if you don't want to crash into the ground. Continually running out of fuel gets rather annoying and I would have liked a few more technical aspects, but this is still gripping stuff – and once you've got used to your plane's handling you'll be able to pull off some impressive strafing runs. More please, Vortex.

▲ Make small talk with your neighbours; why not ask for your lawnmower back?

impressive bosses. Indeed, seeing these behemoths for the first time is incredibly tense and makes for some very dramatic fights.

It might not have an original story, and it's extremely linear, but this is still quality stuff – let's just hope there's a sequel.

Presentation:	85%
Graphics:	80%
Sound:	92%
Gameplay	85%
Lifespan	91%
OVERALL	**86%**

most impressive scrolling we've ever seen. The quasi-3D landscapes are very convincing and Panayi has left no stone unturned in order to make the environments feel as real as possible.

Of course, with so much attention being paid to the visuals, it was inevitable that certain aspects of *T.L.L.* would suffer, and while it's very good, it's not really the simulator we were expecting. Nevertheless, if you're looking for a hardcore, intense arcade title, this is well worth a purchase.

Presentation:	55%
Graphics:	86%
Sound:	42%
Gameplay	83%
Lifespan	81%
OVERALL	**79%**



Reach for the skies...

Format: Arcade
Release: 1987
Publisher: SEGA
Developer: AM2
Price: 10p per play (stand-up machine)

After allowing us to blast giant dragons in *Space Harrier* and race through exotic locations in *OutRun*, Yu Suzuki is now taking to the skies; and it's quite a trip. No doubt inspired by Tom Cruise's *Top Gun*, *After Burner* is yet another frenetic arcade blaster that places you in the cockpit of a heavily laden F-14 Tomcat and pits you against an entire army of enemy planes (with the odd helicopter thrown in for good measure).

Starting off on the back of a huge aircraft carrier, you're thrust into the ether and immediately thrown into one of the most frantic dogfights we've ever witnessed. Wave after wave of enemies constantly bombard you and you'll need a nifty trigger finger and quick reflexes if you want to take down your many airborne foes.

Quickly locking on to your enemies is crucial, as waiting too long will see a flurry of missiles speeding unerringly towards you. Fortunately, swiftly moving the joystick from one side to the other will allow you to perform a barrel roll and move out of harm's way (or, if you're unlucky, into another missile). While you only have a limited amount of ammo, various refuel points are dotted throughout the levels and Suzuki-san has also thrown in a few bonus stages (and several references to past games) in order to help alleviate all the hectic gameplay.

After the success of *OutRun*'s aesthetics, SEGA has once again played up to AM2's strengths and delivered another rollercoaster ride that's full of high-octane thrills and spills. A seriously pumping soundtrack ensures that every minute spent playing *After Burner* is as pleasurable as possible and this is further fuelled by the game's superb, fast-moving visuals. Without doubt, yet another arcade hit from SEGA.

ELLIOT **While racing at hyper speeds through a sky choked with planes and helicopters, I couldn't help but enjoy myself. Considering the amount of time needed to get used to the controls it's going to take a fair few credits if you want to get to the end of the game. Will it get boring? Never. There's something exhilarating about this game that proves how on top of its game SEGA is. *After Burner* is incredibly repetitive yet playable for hours – once you've taken off, it's difficult to stop. You weren't saving your cash, were you?**

In Retrospect

Despite its limitations, *After Burner* is still great fun and even a few brief plays will allow that SEGA magic to quickly shine through. Like *OutRun*, *After Burner* quickly found itself converted to many home systems, but only the Saturn, Dreamcast and Xbox have been able to do it the justice it really deserves. There's a PS2 remake in the works, but judging by past efforts from the SEGA Ages range, we're not holding out too much hope.



▼ "You don't have time to think up there. If you think, you're dead." Quite.

Criticism

Like *Space Harrier* before it, *After Burner* is heavy on the thrills but extremely lightweight when it comes to longevity. While the game is broken up by several bonus stages, they're essentially the same as the main game, but without the enemies to avoid. *After Burner* is also tough and is a lot more unforgiving than *Space Harrier*, so you're going to be going through your credits a lot faster. Just make sure you have plenty of spare change on you...

Presentation:	76%
Graphics:	96%
Sound:	94%
Gameplay	84%
Lifespan	81%
OVERALL	**89%**



THE PICKFORD BROTHERS

interviewed by DARRAN JONES

In the cut-and-thrust world of the games industry, it's rare to find a business association that has lasted over 20 years – especially when both partners are brothers… We catch up with John and Ste Pickford to chart their two decades of designing, developing and innovating

Any gamer worth their salt should be familiar with John and Ste Pickford. Over the last 20 years the brothers have swum against the industry tide and delivered a series of quirky and original titles across a variety of formats. Transfixed with videogames since the early days of the industry, the pair have run their own studios, worked with big names in UK development, and were the firstin Europe to work with certain gaming platforms. But, as with so many stalwarts of programming and design, the Pickfords' first gaming experiences were with some classic titles and machines.

"I was hooked on videogames almost from the moment they first appeared – *Space Invaders* or Atari's *Sprint* are probably the first games I actually saw," Ste says. "I found them puzzling at first because my only experience of arcade machines were fruit machines or *Penny Falls*, and they all involved trying to win money somehow. The lack of a 'prize' slot on the machine and the concept of games which you paid money to play, but no matter how well you do you can never win your 10p back, was strange at first." Strange it may have been, but Ste, like his older brother, was smitten; by the time John got his first Spectrum ZX81 in 1981, the brothers were struck with the gaming bug.

John was the first to break into the gaming industry by getting a job at the newly formed Binary Design in Manchester in 1985. He was a programmer and earned "the princely sum of £6,000 a year". A year later Ste came to do some work experience at Binary, where he started off designing some loading screens and ended up staying an extra week in order to design more. So impressed was boss Andy Hieke with Ste's work that he decided to hire him. "I was the head of the art department by the start of 1987," Ste recalls.

GOING THEIR OWN WAY

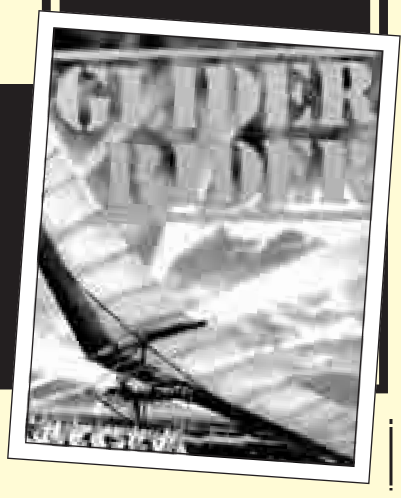
John and Ste quickly built up an impressive portfolio of titles that included the likes of *Glider Rider*, *Amaurote* and *Feud*, and the brothers worked on an impressive average of one new game every two months. After two years, however, the Pickfords upped sticks and formed their own studio, Zippo Games, to work on the Amiga and Atari ST. After just two titles (*Cosmic Pirate* and *Voodoo Nightmare*), Zippo joined forces with Rare and began working on titles for the NES – which, at that time, was unknown in Europe.

The brothers found the transition from computers to the new breed of consoles quite a revelation, not least because of the new standards of quality control they encountered. "Not only were the games so, so much better, they were all bug-free and finished," Ste marvels. "Most computer games of the time were really just riffs on a single idea, not often properly crafted into full products. Console games… were designed to be played and enjoyed for much longer. For computer titles we used to just increase the speed value on every new level, until presumably the game would crash or become unplayable – we didn't

BROTHERLY LOVE

Despite the many pressures associated with the gaming industry, the Pickfords insist they've never had any problems working with each other in such close proximity. "There's never been any competition," John says. "We have completely different skills, so we've pretty much always worked together quite naturally."

"We've always worked together from the time I started at Binary Design," explains Ste. "When John was making games at home, however, he didn't let me get involved much at all. Ultimately, we have complementary skills, and think the same way, so we're more like one solid unit than two people working together."



know because we couldn't play games that well."

"It was the sheer professionalism and polish that was required that made the change so different," John adds. "Games actually got tested, no bugs were tolerated and it was expected that a game could actually be completed. It was a big learning experience and very valuable."

Zippo's partnership with Rare proved interesting for the Pickfords; not only were they one of the first studios to get their hands on NES development kits before anyone else outside Japan (producing the legendary *Solar Jetman* in 1989), but they were the first developers in Europe to begin work on the Game Boy. Rare bought out Zippo at the end of 1989, renaming the studio Rare Manchester. John claims that it was thanks to Rare that he and his brother really "got into" consoles, but despite learning a lot from the Twycross-based developer, Ste's memories aren't all happy.

"Rare were great to work with on an even footing, when we were a company being subcontracted to do work for them," reveals the younger Pickford, before explaining that it was a different story after the buyout. "They were over-strict, imposing arbitrary rules from 'head office' which weren't in the best interests of the studio. It became very miserable very quickly."

Clearly not happy with their situation, the brothers moved over to Software Creations in 1990 (where they got to play with one of the first SNES development kits in Europe) and they created titles such as *Plok!*, *Equinox*, *Maximum Carnage* and *Tin Star*. They were also involved with early work on the N64 – an art package called *Creator* was later modified to become *Mario Paint 64*, though it only got released in Japan.

SOLO STUDIO SUCCESS

Eventually, however, the brothers once again yearned for their own studio and in 1996 Zed Two was created, though the early days weren't easy. "Setting up Zed Two was very difficult," confirms Ste. "What we were trying to do – develop fresh, original IP and new game ideas with a small, dynamic and focused team – was totally against the flow of what the rest of the industry expected. No publishers want original games, they only want clones of current hits. They also don't want small independent studios – they want you to be big with hundreds of staff and millions of dollars in the bank, so if the game is late or they need it early they can insist you chuck another 20 or 30 staff at the game, and when they don't pay you for 6-12 months you don't have them over a barrel by insisting they have to pay you or you'll go bust."

"It was very hard in the early days," agrees John. "Ste and I had to live on very little for the first year or so, although things gradually got easier as cash flow improved and at

SOFTOGRAPHY

Two decades of design

Glider Rider **(Quicksilva), ZX Spectrum | Amstrad CPC | Commodore 64 – JP: Designer, Programmer; SP: Loading Screen, Font 1986**

180 **(Mastertronic), ZX Spectrum | Amstrad CPC | Commodore 64 – SP: Lead Artist 1986**

Zub **(Mastertronic), ZX Spectrum | Amstrad CPC | Commodore 64 – JP: Designer, Lead Programmer; SP: Lead Artist 1986**

Feud **(Mastertronic), ZX Spectrum | Amstrad CPC | Commodore 64 – JP: Designer; SP: Lead Artist 1987**

Amaurote **(Mastertronic), ZX Spectrum | Amstrad CPC | Commodore 64 – JP: Designer, Programmer; SP: Lead Artist 1987**

Cosmic Pirate **(Palace Software), Amiga | Atari ST – JP: Designer, Lead Programmer; SP: Lead Artist 1988**

IronSword (Wizards & Warriors II) **(Acclaim), NES – JP: Designer; SP: Designer, Lead Artist 1989**

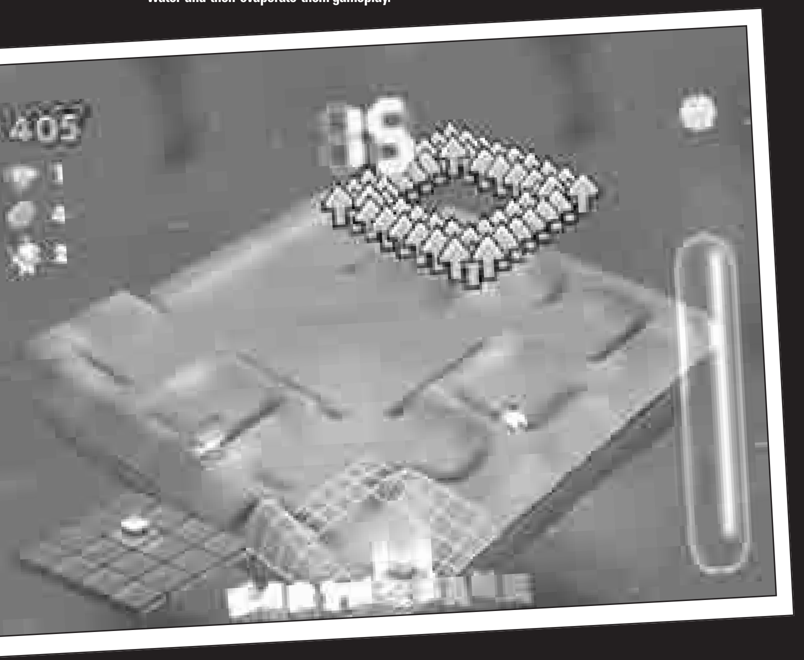


▲ *Tin Star* was an enjoyable (albeit fairly limited) lightgun title that used the SNES' massive SuperScope, for that authentic Wild West, um, rocket launcher effect…

THE PICKFORD BROTHERS



▼ *Aqua Aqua* was the PS2 sequel to the N64's *Wetrix* and had the same fiendishly addictive build-pools-of-water-and-then-evaporate-them gameplay.



one point we were doing very well indeed. Sadly, we were hit by two non-paying publishers, which pretty much wiped our reserves."

Nevertheless, the Pickfords have fond memories of their two studios and cite them as their most enjoyable working environments. "I know it was my own company," says Ste, "but we had a very enjoyable, productive and creative atmosphere going, and had just about the best team of 20 or so people I've ever seen. It's a crying shame that such a strong and productive unit has now been broken up."

We'd have to agree, because the founding of Zed Two saw the Pickfords' ideas blossom and it was easy to see the direction they were intending to take. You only have to see the likes of *Wetrix* and *Aqua Aqua* to realise that the studio held plenty of promise; *Wetrix* in particular is a classic example of how the brothers' experimentation with ideas would eventually evolve into a full game. "I was really interested in interactive environments and one of the ideas kicking around was simulating water," says John. "Originally we were planning on using the system as part of a bigger game but when we got it working it seemed to have potential, so we spent a month creating the basic game prototype."

The bigger game in question was going to be called *Vampire Circus*, but the Pickfords were busy having fun with the water technology. "We wanted to simulate water and fire and other elements," says Ste. "Water came first and the technology demo was so much fun, and we needed a deal so badly, that we decided to cheekily turn that into a game, then hopefully return to *Vampire Circus* later."

ZED'S DEAD, BABY...

The Pickfords never got round to finishing *Vampire Circus* as Zed Two was bought by Warthog in 2002, only to be closed down just over twelve months later in February this year. Understandably, the brothers have found this frustrating, not least because they've been severed from some of the work they consider to be their best. "We've got better over time, so I'm more proud of our more recent titles – *Sticky Balls* and *Pillage* I'm very proud of," says Ste. "I'm so proud that we managed to get an original game with original IP to market in to the current industry climate, which is very, very hostile to such products. *Wetrix* and *Aqua Aqua* I'm also very proud of because, again, we managed to get an original game to market and keep ownership of the IP with Zed Two at a time when this was considered pretty much impossible without a big hit or lots of funding behind you (we had neither). What's disappointing is that after so much personal struggle and effort to keep the ownership of these IPs with Zed Two, John and I have now been separated from Zed Two and have now lost the rights to the games that we put so much into."

What's particularly galling is that *Sticky Balls* is now in development for Sony's PSP (a video of the game was shown at E3 this year), but the Pickfords will never see the fruits of their labours. "Sadly, I've lost the rights to that game and any involvement with its ongoing development, which is probably the most frustrating thing that's ever happened to me," says John.

With this in mind, it's unsurprising that the brothers are planning to go independent again. Last April, the pair set up Zee-3 so they can distribute their own games online. The site isn't live yet, but it will let them work on the titles that they want to make, which has always been their aim. "I'm proud of the games where we got a chance to express our ideas," reveals Ste. "Sure, they were all compromised one way or another by time and budget constraints or publisher interference, but generally we did better work when we were left to it."

Having owned their own studios before, though, they know that they may have a tough time, particularly in the current industry climate. "It's almost impossible to get funding for an original game nowadays," laments John, "and judging by the lukewarm critical response to *Future Tactics* [the Pickfords' current title] it seems production values and licences are valued more than interesting gameplay and ideas. Nowadays, to reach the market a game has to fit neatly into an existing category whilst providing the correct number of unique selling points. The only hope for fresh, exciting games seems to be the indie scene. I think a lot of frustrated game designers and programmers are looking at the internet as a way of reaching an audience for their work."

It's a thought that's mirrored by Ste. "The industry's got better and worse in different ways at the same time," he says. "It's better in terms of the quality of games and talent of the people involved, the



▲ The sequel to *Solstice*, *Equinox* improved on the original game in every way possible.

HOW TO GET AHEAD

Despite taking computer studies at school, the Pickfords found they picked up more programming knowledge at home. "To be honest, anyone with their own ZX81 or Spectrum was way ahead of anything taught on our course," says John. "I would say I'm largely self-taught, although I've learned a lot from the people I've worked with over the years." For Ste it was more complicated; with the computer studies O-Level course full, the younger Pickford found himself stuck in business studies and used his first mock exam to write a comic strip explaining why he was refusing to complete the test. The gamble paid off and Ste was able to take the course. Despite being told it was impossible to take the final exam, as he was two years behind the other students, Ste went ahead anyway and got an A.

professionalism, time and money available, and the place videogames have secured in our culture. It's far worse in terms of the opportunities and freedom afforded to game creators by the industry. Actually making games in a commercial environment is generally a pretty depressing and demoralising experience in most cases, especially if you have any ambitions to make good and interesting games that don't happen to match exactly what marketing's flavour of the month is this month."

BACK TO THE FUTURE?

Frustrations aside, John and Ste are determined to carry on making the kind of games that they want to play and have even considered doing a George Lucas and returning to some of their older titles. "It is an idea we're toying with for now," admits Ste. "Some of those games have great ideas that were poorly implemented or not thought through well enough at the time. I wouldn't want to do a remake that wallowed in nostalgia. I'd rather a proper modern remake which brought the ideas bang up to date."

"A lot of our old Speccy games aren't that good, but there's a good idea at the heart of them," agrees John. "I'd love to take games like *Zub*, *Feud* or *Glider Rider* and develop them properly." With interest in retro gaming booming, they could be onto a winner. In the meantime, however, it seems the brothers are more than happy to drink beer, watch movies, play games and spend time with their families, while planning their next moves in the industry. And when they're back, we'll be there at the front of the welcoming party.

SOFTOGRAPHY CONT.

Solar Jetman: Hunt For The Golden Warpship (Tradewest), NES | PlayChoice 10 – JP: Designer; SP: Designer, Graphic Artist 1989

Wizards & Warriors III (Acclaim), NES – JP: Executive Producer; SP: Designer, Graphic Artist 1990

Solstice 2 (Epic / Sony), SNES – JP: Designer, Lead Programmer; SP: Designer, Lead Artist 1990

Plok! (Tradewest), SNES – JP: Producer, Designer; SP: Art Director, Designer 1992

Ken Griffey Jnr Presents Major League Baseball (Nintendo), SNES – SP: Lead Artist 1993

Maximum Carnage (Acclaim), SNES | Genesis – JP: Producer, Designer; SP: Art Director 1994

Tin Star (Nintendo), SNES – JP: Producer, Designer; SP: Art Director, Designer 1994

Wetrix (Ocean), Nintendo 64 | PC – JP: Designer, Lead Programmer; SP: Producer, Lead Artist 1996

Aqua Aqua (Imagineer), PlayStation2 – JP: Designer; SP: Executive Producer 2000

Future Tactics [aka Pillage] (Crave Entertainment), PlayStation2 | GameCube | XBox – JP: Designer; SP: Executive Producer 2001

Sticky Balls (N/A), PC | Pocket PC – JP: Designer, Programmer; SP: Designer, Producer, Artist 2002



▲ Created under Rare, *IronSword* was basic but enjoyable. And Fabio was the star of the box art. Result.



Share your views about old-school gaming

First Contact

If you're into retro gaming and you've got something to share with the world, why not write to us at: games™ Retro, Highbury Entertainment, Paragon House, St Peter's Road, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH1 2JS Or you can email: gamestm@paragon.co.uk

WHERE'S THE SNES?

Dear games™

I love the mag and really enjoy the retro section, but I have a small problem. Even though I've bought your magazine for the last year, you've never covered the best console ever made – Nintendo's SNES.

The sheer range and diversity of the games were only matched by its fantastic graphics and superb sound; there really is nothing that can come close to it. Then you have all the fantastic Square games like *The Secret Of Mana*, *Chrono Trigger* and the excellent *Final Fantasy* games and that's before you even mention of the Nintendo classics like *A Link To The Past*, *Mario World* and *Super Metroid*. Please, please, please can you cover it in the next issue? You'll make a Nintendo fan very, very happy.

Gavin Neville, Edinburgh

Sorry, Gavin, but the SNES was covered back in issue 4, which is no longer available to order from our back-issue service. However, this isn't the first time that the SNES (or many other consoles for that matter) have been requested and it's quite possible that you'll see them return in a new feature early next year.

FECK ME

Dear games™,

If I'd known the controversy it would have ended up causing, I'd have paid more attention to what version of *Street Fighter* Dougal and Damo were playing when we filmed that particular episode of *Father Ted*. But for the record, you're right – those joysticks aren't plugged in. Great magazine!

Graham Linehan, via email

■ There we were, wondering whether we should just ring Channel 4 to try to solve this *Street Fighter* thing once and for all, when *Father Ted* co-creator Graham Linehan emails us to set us straight. Well, sort of. Thank you, Mr Linehan, sir. We're not worthy, and so on.

ROUND THREE

Dear games™,

Back in Retro Contact, issue 18, I revealed that the *Street Fighter II* game being played on an episode of *Father Ted* was a development version of *Street Fighter II: Special Champion Edition* for the SEGA Genesis.

After reading Michael Carrig's letter in Retro Contact, issue 20, I knew I needed to find evidence if the world was to believe my claim. My old *Electronic Gaming Monthly* issues from the early Nineties have long since left my possession, but, thanks to the internet, I found a *Street Fighter* fan site that has posted pictures of the early Genesis development version of *Street Fighter II: Special Championship Edition*.

Behold and compare with *Father Ted*: www.chikapu.com/streetfighterlegends/sfcebeta.html. Hopefully this is evidence enough that the game on *Father Ted* is in fact this prototype game. Now, the real question is, how did it get on to *Father Ted*? Thanks again for a great magazine!

Brenton Borge, New York

■ Thanks, Brenton. While the screenshots aren't the best quality, it seems pretty obvious now that, well, you could be right. The *Street Fighter*/*Father Ted* saga has proved to be an extremely popular subject and thanks to everyone who's chipped in with bright ideas for which version of the game is being played on the show. Although if you look to your left, you'll see that even the experts aren't too sure.

SEGA IS MEGA

Dear games™

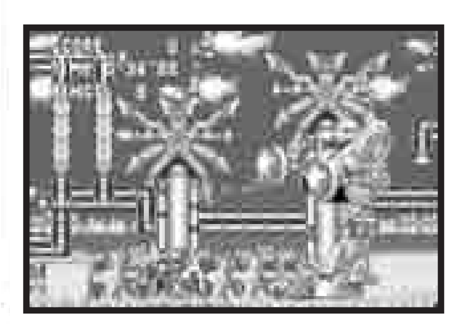
I'm writing to say how much I enjoy your magazine – I've never bought a games magazine before, but your article about the Mega CD really tempted me. I did have a Mega CD as a young girl but I was completely clueless about it. I nagged my mum to buy it off my cousin as he got bored of it after two months (he, being older and wiser, had probably realised how expensive it was) and in the time I owned it, I think only two games were ever bought for it.

Nevertheless, I loved my *Sonic CD* to bits and I played *Ecco The Dolphin* constantly. I was a bit too young to understand the true value of money; I remember my family refusing to buy any more games 'because they were too expensive' and I didn't know about independent games shops back then – I doubt there were any on the island I lived on anyway. The only time I saw games were in high-street shops.

However, I now feel as though I have a greater access to games. I recently bought a NES and a Master System for a pound in a charity shop and I've been enjoying myself going around Gamestation buying old games and still having money left over to buy my weekly shopping and pay the bills. So, yeah, I'm a very happy girl!

Nina V, via email

■ Thanks, Nina, we're glad that you're enjoying the mag and that you've rediscovered some classic machines. There are plenty of cool games available for both systems and you should be able to dig up some bargains in indie stores as well as less specialist outlets like charity shops and car boot sales.





STAR LETTER

MUSIC TO MY EARS

Dear games™
After reading your feature on *OutRun* in issue 21, I instantly recalled the great soundtrack and wondered if you ever considered creating a CD with classic tunes on it. I wouldn't mind paying a little extra and I'm sure it would be really popular.
Paul Brooks, via email

Well, Paul, while your idea is sound in theory, there are a few small problems. First, we don't have cover mounts on the magazine; the bigger problem, however, is that due to licensing deals it would be extremely tricky to get hold of a decent selection of tunes. Great idea, though. Have a t-shirt to make up for not getting a CD…



We're sorry, but there'll be no 'Mystical Sound Shower' on the front of the mag. Not that we don't want it there…

PIRACY – GOOD OR BAD?

Dear games™
I've got quite a collection of new and old games, yet I have continued to buy older SNES games off websites such as eBay. After the feature in Issue 19, which showed how filtering techniques could improve games on emulators, I decided to play *Super Mario World* on both the ZSNES emulator and then on my original SNES. Apart from the original SNES controller being superior to my PC joypad, I don't think I'll be playing it any more on the Nintendo machine.

I'm not sure what other readers think, but with these emulators surpassing the original consoles, are fans like me wasting time and money buying these original games when they could download illegal ROMs and play them for a fraction of the price? Looking at the size of these ROMs, hundreds can clearly be burned onto one CD and take up far less space. They also work instantly every time rather than tilting the cart from side to side in my yellowish old SNES hoping to see that reassuring screen.

It would be sad to see my carts along with their cardboard boxes joining the Spectrum tapes on top of the wardrobe but I guess it may be inevitable now. All may not be lost, though, as four-player *Bomberman* and *Mario Kart* may keep me going for some time and save the day.
Graham Tarrant, via gamestm.co.uk

Sure, some emulated games do look better than their original counterparts, but at the end of the day, using ROMs is illegal and we're sure that most publishers and developers wouldn't be at all happy about your suggestion to load all their games onto one handy CD. Just because piracy is an ingrained aspect of the industry, that doesn't make it right. Now go back to your humble SNES and play *Mario World* properly – you know it makes sense…

LET'S GO, MR DRIVER

Dear games™,
I've just read your 'Clash of the Titans' feature [issue 21] and while I don't agree with the end result (I loved the C64 version of *Gryzor*), I think the actual feature was great. It instantly brought back fond memories of discussing the best versions at school and I hope to see this covered in later issues.

If you can't think of many other titles to use, may I suggest *Chase HQ*? Although I played it on various formats at the time (Amstrad, C64 and Amiga) the Spectrum version would win hands down. It looked amazing, played really well and was an extremely faithful conversion.
Dean T, via email

Glad you liked 'Clash of the Titans', and you're right, *Chase HQ* on the Spectrum was really good. Saying that, we'd rather go back to the Saturn version nowadays (complete with the sequel, *SCI*) although at the time, *Chase HQ* on the Spectrum was king of the road.

ARCADE MAGIC

Dear games™,
I loved your feature about Retrokade but was devastated to find out that they have had to temporarily close down. Do you have any idea when they'll be back in business?
Michael Jones, via email

■ As far as we know, Rav and Andy (the owners of Retrokade) are still looking for a new home for all their impressive cabs. If you want more information, your best bet is to head over to www.retrokade.co.uk, which will give you the news as it happens.



Retro Contact is sponsored by Joystick Junkies. Each month's Star Letter will win its author an item of retro gaming clothing of their choice worth up to £20.



C·L·A·S·S·I·C C·O·N·S·O·L·E

BUYERS GUIDE QUICK REFERENCE

BUYERS GUIDE

It might be easy to play retro games through emulation, but there's nothing quite like owning the original system – that musty smell of ancient electronics can never really be replicated with a PC. Of course, there's always a price to pay and unscrupulous dealers are out to make a quick buck, but you really don't have to pay through the nose if you look in the right places. Charity shops, car boot sales and eBay are all good places to start, but before you do, use our guide to see how much you should be paying…

3DO

Panasonic 3DO	£60
Goldstar 3DO	£50-60

ACORN COMPUTERS

BBC Micro	£50
Acorn Electron	£40

AMSTRAD

Amstrad CPC 464	£20
Amstrad CPC 664	£20-25
Amstrad CPC 6128	£25
Amstrad GX4000	£50

ATARI

Atari VCS 2600	£30 (wooden models tend to cost more)
Atari ST	£40 (with software)
Atari Lynx	£15
Atari Jaguar	£20-30

COMMODORE

Commodore Vic 20	£15-20
Commodore 64	£25-35 (varies according to model)
Commodore Amiga	£35-40 (varies according to model)
Commodore CDTV	£50-60
C64GS	£50 (becoming more sought-after)
Commodore CD32	£35

MISC

GCE Vectrex (General Consumer Electronics)	£20-250
MB Vectrex (Milton Bradley)	£175-200
JAMMA compatible cabinets	£100-350 (depending on model)
Supergun	£150-200 (varies according to model)

NEC

PC Engine	£70-80
Turbo Grafx-16	£50-60
Turbo Duo	£115-220
PC Engine GT	£100-200
Super Grafx	£200-300

NINTENDO

Game & Watch	£15-50 (depending on title)
Nintendo Entertainment System	£15-20
Game Boy/Game Boy Pocket	£10
Game Boy Color	£15
Super Nintendo	£20-25
Virtual Boy	£75-100
Nintendo 64	£20-25

SEGA

Master System	£20
Mega Drive	£20-25
Game Gear	£10-25
Mega CD	£40-60
SEGA 32X	£30
SEGA Nomad	£75-150
SEGA Saturn	£20-35
Dreamcast	£20-40

SINCLAIR

Sinclair ZX-81	£40
ZX Spectrum 48K	£40-50
ZX Spectrum +	£30
ZX Spectrum 128K	£40
ZX Spectrum +2	£35
ZX Spectrum +3	£40

SNK

Neo Geo MVS Single Slot (Arcade system)	£70 (prices for multi-slots are higher)
Neo Geo AES (home system)	£175-225
Neo Geo CD	£125-175
Neo Geo CDZ	£150-175
Neo Geo Pocket Color	£30-50

MACHINE OF THE MONTH



- **NAME:** PC Engine GT
- **PRICE:** £100-200 with games
- **THREE OF THE BEST:**
  Devil Crash (est price £50)
  R-Type 1 (est price £18)
  Galaga '88 (est price £14)
- This handheld was well above the competition. If you're after one, make sure it has no sound problems and that the screen has no missing pixels.

HOW TO USE GAMES TRADING MARKET

SELLING

Simply send the following to: gtm@paragon.co.uk
■ Your name ■ Your age (you must be over 18)
■ Your home address and telephone number (this will not be given out) ■ Your email address ■ The item(s) you wish to sell (no more than five per month) ■ The condition of the item(s) ■ How much you want for the item(s)
Each item will be listed along with your region.

BUYING

Mail the following details to: gtm@paragon.co.uk
■ Your name ■ Your age (you must be over 18)
■ Your home address and telephone number (this will not be given out) ■ Your email address ■ The reference number for the item you want. Your email address will be passed to the seller, who will contact you to close the deal and arrange payment and delivery. This runs on a first come, first served basis.

WANTED

Contact us in the same way as above stating what items you want and any preferences on condition or price.

GTM RULES AND SMALL PRINT

This service is for private sellers, not dealers. Retro items only (nothing post-Dreamcast). No Mega Drive *FIFA* games – everyone has at least two. Highbury Entertainment cannot accept responsibility for items lost or broken in the post.

BUY & SELL your retro games with games™

GAMES TRADING MARKET

Searching for an elusive copy of Radiant Silvergun? Want to sell that pile of Spectrum games taking up space around the house? Then check out GTM, the most authentic retro sales column in the world.

FOR SALE – LOT 100
WONDERSWAN COLOR
Boxed, with four games including *Final Fantasy I* and *II*. Mint condition. £25. North Tyneside



FOR SALE

LOT 86 – *Radiant Silvergun* for Japanese Saturn. Mint condition, includes spine card. £180. Salisbury.

LOT 88 – *Sabre Wulf* for the Spectrum. No box or instructions, but the game does work. £2.50.

LOT 89 – Amiga 500 with 20 games including *Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis, Stunt Car Racer, Zool, The Secret Of Monkey Island* and *Eye Of The Beholder*. Comes with all relevant leads and is perfect for a beginner. £120. Southampton.

LOT 90 – Neo-Geo AES with two joysticks, a memory card and 11 great games including *SNK Vs Capcom Chaos, Metal Slug 3* and *4*, *Matrimelee, Fatal Fury Special* and *Alpha Mission* (games are Japanese and English, contact for further details). £1,000 ONO. I will consider splitting. Contact Shane at shamus1roks@yahoo.co.uk

LOT 92 – Chipped Japanese Dreamcast in clear case, with Japanese version of *Crazy Taxi, Psyvariar 2, House Of The Dead 2, Capcom Vs SNK, Cosmic Smash, Ikaruga, Powerstone, Street Fighter 3rd Strike* and *Giga Wing*. £180.

LOT 93 – Games: *Daytona USA* (Saturn, PAL), excellent condition, £2. *Ghouls 'N Ghosts* (Amiga, PAL), good condition, £1.50. *Zero Wing* (Mega Drive, PAL), good condition, £7. *Golden Axe 3* (Mega Drive, NTSC), excellent condition, £27. *Soukyugurentai* (Saturn, black cover, NTSC), excellent condition, £28. garethcrowley@hotmail.com

LOT 94 – *Faselei!* for Neo Geo Pocket (US version). Good condition, with instructions and clam shell. £40 (ONO) inc. P+P.

LOT 95 – *Exhumed* for SEGA Saturn. Japanese version in mint condition (complete with spine). Very hard to get hold of and a great game to boot. £20 including P+P. Buckingham.

LOT 96 – SEGA Nomad. Handheld Mega Drive with three games: *Sonic The Hedgehog, Streets Of Rage* and *Golden Axe*. Only plays Genesis titles, but a converter lets you play Japanese and UK games. Screen has several marks on it, but overall the condition is good. £190. Southampton.

LOT 97 – *Sonic The Hedgehog* for SEGA Mega Drive. Boxed and in great condition. £12. Weymouth.

LOT 98 – PAL Super NES with eight games including *Mario World, Uni Rally, Super Castlevania* and *Flashback*. Everything is unboxed, but in very good condition. £90. Aberdeen.

LOT 99 – *Harvest Moon 64* for N64. American version and in mint condition. £55. New Milton.

WANTED

WANTED 35 – *King Of Fighters 2001* or *2002* for Neo Geo AES, boxed with manual. Good price paid. Derbyshire.

WANTED 36 – C64 and any games published by either Hewson or 21st Century Entertainment. Manchester.

WANTED 41 – SEGA 32X. Must be in good working order. Will pay up to £40. Cambridgeshire.

WANTED 44 – *Sonic CD* for SEGA Mega CD. Will pay up to£30.

WANTED 46 – *Metal Slug* for Neo-Geo AES. Will pay reasonable price if in good condition. Essex.

WANTED 47 – *Illbleed* for SEGA Dreamcast. Any version, good price paid. Contact Andrew Hulme at ashulme1983@hotmail.com

WANTED 48 – *Bug* or *Bug Too* for SEGA Saturn (PAL only) in working condition. Contact Mark at crazy-yak@think-yak.com

WANTED 49 - *Sonic 1, Sonic 2, Sonic 3* and *Sonic & Knuckles*. Would prefer boxes and manuals. Will pay £5 each. Contact iantennie@hotmail.com

WANTED 50 – Amiga with *Battle Chess*. Don't want to pay more than £100. paulnorrie@ntlworld.com.

WANTED 51 – *Elevator Action Returns* for SEGA Saturn. Must be mint and must include spine. Will pay reasonable price.

WANTED 52 – *Jumping Flash 2* for PlayStation. Willing to pay up to £30, but must be in good condition. West Midlands.

WANTED 53 – *Super Probotector* for SNES, in mint condition and with instructions. Will collect if bought locally. Southampton.

GAMES™ RETRO CLASSIFIEDS

Send to: **GTM, games™, Highbury Entertainment, Paragon House, St Peter's Road, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH1 2JS or email gtm@paragon.co.uk**

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Tick classified heading

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Write your advertisement here, one word per box, and only include your name, address, phone number and/or email address below if you want them printed.

THE ULTIMATE COLLECTION

IN A NEW FEATURE, WE POKE AROUND OUR READERS' RETRO COLLECTIONS TO FIND OUT WHAT HIDDEN TREASURES AND ANTIQUE DELIGHTS ARE LURKING IN THEIR HOUSES. THIS MONTH, 30-YEAR-OLD RICHARD MORGAN FROM READING IN BERKSHIRE INVITES GAMES™ INTO HIS HOME...

Q) How long have you been collecting?

A) I started collecting about four or five years ago when I found a brand new SEGA Saturn all dusty and forgotten about in the corner of my local Dixons and decided to rescue it.

Q) How did your interest in collecting come about?

A) It started with the Saturn. I got the popular games for it first then some of the more collectable ones. This led to collecting SEGA consoles and games and then on to all formats. I think it's the thrill of finding a rare game in a bargain bin or game store that drives me on as well as playing those games I remember as a child. I missed a lot of the early consoles, too, because I had Amigas and Spectrums, so now I'm catching up.

Q) What's your most prized possession?

A) Difficult to pick just one thing so I'll have to say my complete UK Neo Geo Pocket Color collection. Took me quite a while to build up and getting that thirty-ninth game (UK *Pocket Reversi*) was fantastic.

Q) What's the most highly desirable item that you haven't found yet?

A) I'm still trying to track down a mint and complete NES Deluxe Set with R.O.B. It's the biggest NES set they made and also one of the rarest. I'd also like a Wondermega, more Mega CD games, Hi-Saturn Navi… the list is virtually endless.

Q) What sources do you use and have you ever found a real bargain?

A) I go to second-hand games shops, car boot sales, eBay and anywhere else I can buy stuff. I have a number of bargains under my belt but the two that stand out the most would be my boxed PC Engine GT with *Soldier Blade* and two other games for £5, and my boxed and complete copy of *Panzer Dragoon Saga* for £2

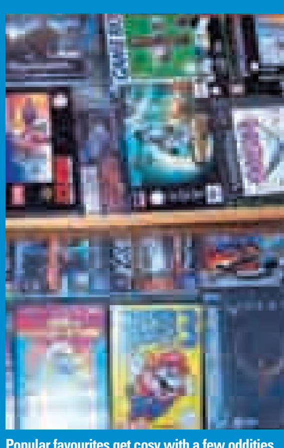
Q) How much is your collection worth?

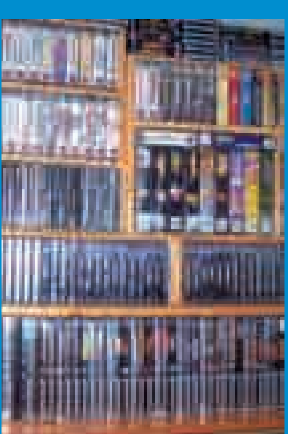
A) I've never really added it all up but there's quite a bit of stuff. Probably enough to buy myself a nice car…

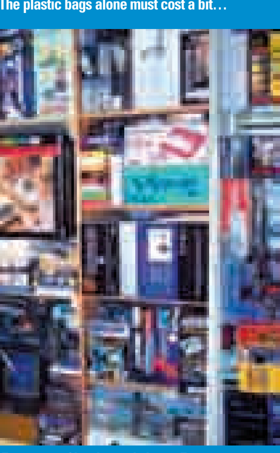
Q) What does your partner or family think of your collecting?

A) My girlfriend is a *very* understanding woman. She's even helped me out on occasion – she found me a Colecovision with games for £3. Bargain.


This man owns everything. Probably even you.


Popular favourites get cosy with a few oddities.


The plastic bags alone must cost a bit…


Every sort of hardware is here. *Every* sort.

NEXT MONTH IN RETRO

Next month's issue of Retro will once again be packed with all sorts of old-school gaming goodness, including a look at Atari's Jaguar, the family tree returns, and an old favourite is the Greatest Retro Game Ever

See you then!

Up above the streets and houses…

"Elf is about to die"

ON SALE 09 SEPT


eMag

ESSENTIALS

TOO MANY GAMES, NOT ENOUGH MONEY. THANKFULLY, NOT ALL OF THEM ARE WORTH SPENDING YOUR HARD-EARNED CASH ON. IF YOU WANT TO TASTE THE CREAM OF THE CROP, YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE…

PLAYSTATION2

MANUFACTURER Sony **UK LAUNCH DATE** 24 November 2000 **MEDIA** 4.75-inch DVD Disc **CURRENT PRICE** £139.99



The oldest of the next-generation consoles, having had well over a year's head start over both the GameCube and Xbox. With support across the board from third-party developers, a built-in DVD player and backward compatibility with older PSone games, it's the most popular videogame console available today.

TWENTY MUST-HAVE PLAYSTATION2 GAMES

Title	Publisher	Developer	Comment
Amplitude	Sony	Harmonix	Music games have never needed as much skill as this
Beyond Good & Evil	Ubisoft	In-House	A fine example of adventuring; well worth the wait
Burnout 2: Point Of Impact	Acclaim	Criterion	Arcade racing at its purest – fun with a capital F
Colin McRae Rally 04	Codemasters	In-House	Realistic racing for the purist in all of us
Dark Chronicle	Sony	In-House	In-depth RPGs don't come much bigger than this
Devil May Cry	Capcom	In-House	The original is still the best by a long shot
Disgaea: Hour Of Darkness	Atlus	Nippon Ichi	Like your RPGs practically endless? Then this is for you
Grand Theft Auto: Double Pack	Rockstar Games	Rockstar North	The two games that pretty much put the PS2 where it is
Gregory Horror Show	Capcom	In-House	Bizarre, twisted and yet oh-so enjoyable
Hitman: Contracts	Eidos	Io Interactive	Silent but deadly – a real killer of a game
Ico	SCEE	In-House	Possibly the most beautiful game ever made
Metal Slug 3 IMPORT	Playmore	In-House	Old-school shooting has never been so much fun
NBA Street 2	Electronic Arts	EA Sports BIG	The daddy of basketball games – no contest
Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time	Ubisoft	In-House	Ubisoft shows how to make a proper retro update
Pro Evolution Soccer 3	Konami	In-House	If you only own one football game, it should be this
Project Zero	Wanadoo	Tecmo	Scarier than anything else out there today
Rez	SEGA	UGA	Deceptively simple – draws you in before you know it
SSX 3	Electronic Arts	EA Sports BIG	The *Tony Hawk* of the snowboarding world
Suikoden III IMPORT	Konami	In-House	Konami's RPG series is still as good as it ever was
Tony Hawk's Underground	Activision	Neversoft	The defining moment in the *Tony Hawk* series

WHY YOU SHOULD OWN…

Burnout 2: Point Of Impact
We've played *Burnout 3* – it's rather good. Seeing as you haven't, though, you're best off buying the last one.



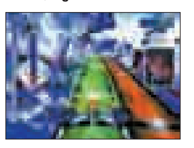
Gregory Horror Show
Comedic puzzle genius at its very best, with more than enough Japanese weirdness to go round.



Metal Slug 3
Most definitely the high point of the *Metal Slug* series – challenging enough to keep everyone happy.



Amplitude
Praise be to Harmonix for servicing all our musical gaming needs. If you're online, it gets even better…



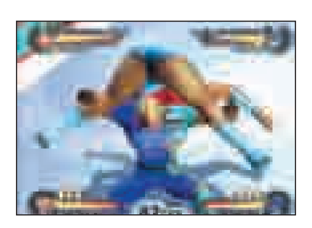
Ico
Good lord – what part of 'you must own this game' don't you understand? It's for your own good, we tell you.



VIEWPOINT
ATHENS 2004
While Sony's attempt to deliver a successful Olympic title seems to have been lost on a lot of people, we've had more than enough fun battling it out amongst ourselves for those coveted gold medals. It's like playing *Track & Field*, but with a bit more skill. Lovely.



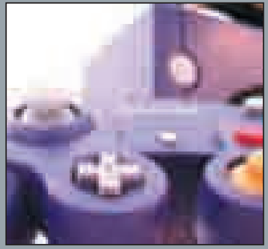
VIEWPOINT
KINNIKUMAN GENERATIONS
Yes, bizarre Japanese anime wrestling is very in at the moment – hence our enjoyment of Bandai's latest videogame translation of the *Ultimate Muscle* cartoon. It's no *Def Jam Vendetta*, but it's a good laugh all the same.



VIEWPOINT
SHELLSHOCK: NAM '67
Eidos' example of wartime atrocity certainly delivers some of the atmosphere it aims for, if not quite all the gameplay to go with it. The game isn't due out now until September, so you'll have to wait a little longer before you can make up your own mind.













XBOX

MANUFACTURER Microsoft **UK LAUNCH DATE** 13 March 2002 **MEDIA** 4.75-inch DVD Disc **CURRENT PRICE** £129.99



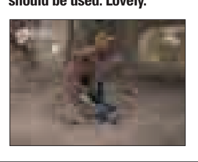
Despite a slow start, the Xbox has swiftly become one of the major players in today's console market. Suggestions that the machine is only 'a PC in a box' are founded upon the built-in hard drive, broadband support and DVD player. However, the Xbox is far more accessible to gamers than most PCs.

TWENTY MUST-HAVE XBOX GAMES

Title	Publisher	Developer	Comment
Beyond Good & Evil	Ubisoft	In-House	A fine example of adventuring; well worth the wait
Burnout 2: Point Of Impact	Acclaim	Criterion Studios	Arcade racing at its purest – fun with a capital F
Colin McRae Rally 04	Codemasters	In-House	Realistic racing for the purist in all of us
Deus Ex: Invisible War	Eidos	Ion Storm	Freestyle adventuring with a decent first-person twist
Freedom Fighters	Electronic Arts	Io Interactive	Top-notch squad-based action with an arcade flavour
Grand Theft Auto: Double Pack	Rockstar Games	Rockstar North	The best versions of *GTA III* and *Vice City*, without a doubt
Halo	Microsoft	Bungie	The game that sold a million Xboxes
Hitman: Contracts	Eidos	Io Interactive	Silent but deadly – a real killer of a title
Jet Set Radio Future	SEGA	Smilebit	Cel-shading at its very best and a soundtrack to die for
Knights Of The Old Republic	Activision	BioWare	One of the best *Star Wars* games ever made
Ninja Gaiden	Microsoft	Tecmo	Damn tough, but a great example of style and gameplay
Panzer Dragoon Orta	SEGA	Smilebit	Classic shoot-'em-up action, the SEGA way
Project Gotham Racing 2	Microsoft	Bizarre Creations	Redefining how we play games online
Project Zero	Microsoft	Tecmo	Scarier than anything else out there today
Rainbow Six 3	Ubisoft	In-House	Fairly decent action-strategy that comes alive online
Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow	Ubisoft	In-House	Even better than the original, with a storming Live mode
SSX 3	Electronic Arts	EA Sports BIG	The *Tony Hawk* of the snowboarding world
Thief: Deadly Shadows	Eidos	Ion Storm	Splinter Cell for the medieval age? Sounds good to us…
TimeSplitters 2	Eidos	Free Radical	More multiplayer fun than most other FPS games
Tony Hawk's Underground	Activision	Neversoft	The defining moment in the *Tony Hawk* series

WHY YOU SHOULD OWN…

Ninja Gaiden
It might be a bit difficult for some, but it's still a fine example of how the Xbox should be used. Lovely.



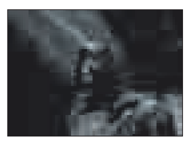
Jet Set Radio Future
Part of the series that gave meaning to the term 'cel-shaded', this is still a very enjoyable game.



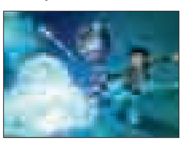
Project Gotham Racing 2
With the Paris booster pack now available for download, it's not surprising that this one is back again.



Thief: Deadly Shadows
The very definition of what stealth games are all about – Ion Storm has done well with this update.

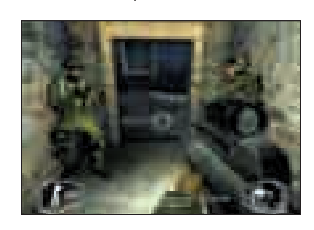


Beyond Good & Evil
A damn fine adventure, even if it did get ignored by many gamers. If you can find it cheap, that's even better.



VIEWPOINT
SHADOW OPS: RED MERCURY

In a world where games like *Rainbow Six 3* and *Full Spectrum Warrior* didn't exist, *Shadow Ops* might have done quite well. In reality, though, it seems that the game can't quite decide what it is and, as such, proves lacklustre.



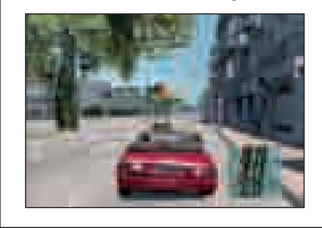
VIEWPOINT
MTV MUSIC GENERATOR 3: THIS IS THE REMIX

Offering almost as much functionality as those extremely expensive sampling programs you see on PCs, Codemasters' latest Xbox music creator is a feast of musical trickery. Not a title for everyone, though.



VIEWPOINT
DRIV3R

Is it a crime that Atari's big game for the summer, as disappointing as it turned out to be, went straight into the top of the charts? Of course not – although it does prove that the majority of the gaming public will buy anything, if it's marketed well enough.

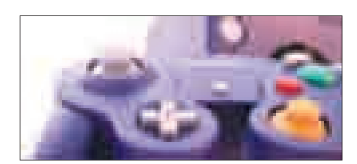


ESSENTIALS

TOO MANY GAMES, NOT ENOUGH MONEY. THANKFULLY, NOT ALL OF THEM ARE WORTH SPENDING YOUR HARD-EARNED CASH ON. IF YOU WANT TO TASTE THE CREAM OF THE CROP, YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE…

GAMECUBE

MANUFACTURER Nintendo **UK LAUNCH DATE** 3 May 2002 **MEDIA** 3-inch Optical Disc **CURRENT PRICE** £79.99



Though the GameCube seems destined to struggle, Nintendo's box of delights is still worth a look. While third-party support is dwindling, it's the first-party releases that really offer some quality gaming. Nintendo still makes some of the finest games ever, so missing out isn't really an option.

TWENTY MUST-HAVE GAMECUBE GAMES

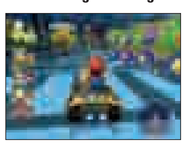
Title	Publisher	Developer	Comment
1080° Avalanche	Nintendo	In-House	A markedly different game to the competition
Animal Crossing IMPORT	Nintendo	In-House	The only game to keep us playing for a full year
Eternal Darkness	Nintendo	Silicon Knights	Scary in a different sense – very intriguing
Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles	Nintendo	Square-Enix	Different from the norm, with a distinct multiplayer flavour
F-Zero GX	Nintendo	Amusement Vision	SEGA does it again with a brilliant retro remake
Harvest Moon: A Wonderful Life	Ubisoft	Natsume	Highly absorbing – the *Animal Crossing* of farming games
Ikaruga	Treasure	In-House	Hard as nails and incredibly addictive
Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour	Nintendo	Camelot	Golfing fun without the need for Tiger Woods
Mario Kart: Double Dash!!	Nintendo	In-House	Another great moment in gaming from Nintendo
Mario Party 5	Nintendo	In-House	Mini-game goodness, whether alone or with friends
Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes	Konami	Silicon Knights	Hardly innovative, but still a great game in its own right
Metroid Prime	Nintendo	In-House	A genre-redefining title in every sense
Resident Evil	Capcom	In-House	Still as scary as it was when it first came out
Resident Evil Zero	Capcom	In-House	An interesting twist on the *Resident Evil* franchise
Soul Calibur II	Namco	In-House	The leader of the pack when it comes to swordplay
Super Monkey Ball 2	SEGA	Amusement Vision	Monkeys and balls – what more could you want?
Viewtiful Joe	Capcom	In-House	Looks great, plays even better
Wario Ware: Mega Party Game$ IMPORT	Nintendo	In-House	A party game that'll have you rolling in the aisles
Zelda: Four Swords Adventures IMPORT	Nintendo	In-House	The perfect excuse to have your friends round all the time
Zelda: The Wind Waker	Nintendo	In-House	One of the many reasons to own a GameCube

WHY YOU SHOULD OWN…

Zelda: 4 Sword Adventures
Lacking a vital mode from the Japanese version, this new style of *Zelda* is still incredible fun with friends.



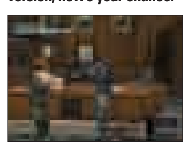
Wario Ware
Still rather challenging, even if you've managed to master the handheld game – plus it's got multiplayer.



Mario Kart: Double Dash!!
A definite grower, even if it doesn't appear to offer much at first. That's the Nintendo magic working…



Animal Crossing
Count those days – there's just over a month until this life-draining game hits the shelves of UK shops. Yay.

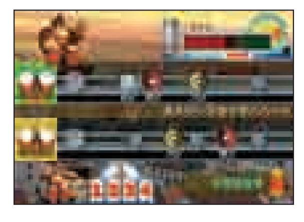


MGS: The Twin Snakes
A solid remake of a classic game. If you never went through the PSone version, now's your chance.

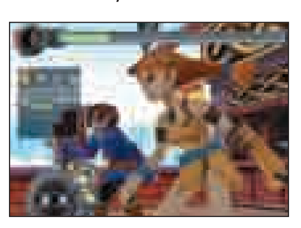
VIEWPOINT
PSO III: C.A.R.D. REVOLUTION
Perhaps not the change in direction that fans of the series were hoping for, but Sonic Team's new style of card battling works… to a degree. Sadly, we doubt it'll end up anywhere other than the bargain bins very soon.



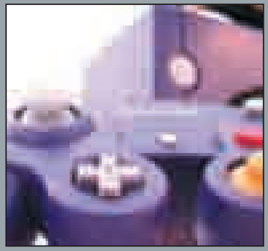
VIEWPOINT
DONKEY KONGA 2
Out now for those of us who don't mind ploughing through endless Japanese menus, this is more than just an add-on disc. With 32 songs, new multiplayer modes and plenty of polish, it's got us digging out our beloved bongo drums all over again.

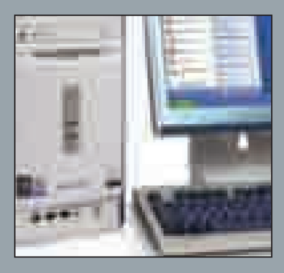


VIEWPOINT
SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS
It's been out for a while, but SEGA's pirate-themed RPG (yes, proper pirates – no wishy-washy buccaneers here) still manages to rate highly among those looking to discover a game that they can really sink their teeth into.







GBA

MANUFACTURER Nintendo **UK LAUNCH DATE** 22 June 2001
MEDIA Flash Cartridge **CURRENT PRICE** £89.99



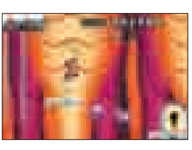
Ideal for gaming on the move, the GBA is a cheap and effective way of getting games to those who don't have time to sit down and play. The leaps in handheld technology mean that GBA games are now more accomplished and can even be compared favourably to their console-based cousins. The lovely SP model is also available now in a variety of colours.

TWENTY MUST-HAVE GAME BOY ADVANCE GAMES

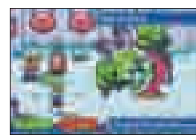
Title	Publisher	Developer
Advance Wars 2	Nintendo	In-House
Boktai: The Sun Is In Your Hand	Konami	In-House
Castlevania: Aria Of Sorrow	Konami	In-House
Final Fantasy Tactics Advance	Nintendo	Square-Enix
Fire Emblem	Nintendo	In-House
Golden Sun: The Lost Age	Nintendo	Camelot
Harvest Moon: Friends Of Mineral Town	Ubisoft	Natsume
Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga	Nintendo	AlphaDream
Mario Vs Donkey Kong	Nintendo	In-House
Medal Of Honor: Infiltrator	Electronic Arts	In-House
Metroid: Zero Mission	Nintendo	In-House
Pokémon Pinball: Ruby And Sapphire	Nintendo	In-House
Pokémon Ruby / Sapphire	Nintendo	In-House
Shining Force: Resurrection Of The Dark Dragon	THQ	SEGA
Street Fighter Alpha 3	Ubisoft	Crawfish
Super Mario Advance 3: Yoshi's Island	Nintendo	In-House
Super Mario Advance 4: SMB 3	Nintendo	In-House
Wario Ware Inc: Mega Microgame$	Nintendo	In-House
Yu-Gi-Oh!: World Championship 2004	Konami	In-House
Zelda: A Link To The Past/Four Swords	Nintendo	In-House

WHY YOU SHOULD OWN...

Mario Vs Donkey Kong
Perhaps a touch too easy for some people, but still an incredibly fun puzzle game from the house of Mario.



M&L: Superstar Saga
As close as you're going to get to *Paper Mario* on the GBA but with some clever gameplay twists thrown in.



Metroid: Zero Mission
Of Samus' two GBA outings, we'd have to recommend this one – it just feels slighty more solid.



PC

MANUFACTURER N/A **UK LAUNCH DATE** N/A
MEDIA 4.75-inch CD/DVD Disc **CURRENT PRICE** £variable



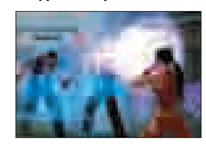
While primarily bought as a work platform, the PC has swiftly become the haven of the more 'mature' gamer. With its natural ability for online and LAN play, it's perfectly tailored for the FPS, strategy and MMORPG genres. However, it can cost a fortune to keep a PC up to date and running fast enough to support flashy graphics.

TWENTY MUST-HAVE PC GAMES

Title	Publisher	Developer
Battlefield Vietnam	EA	Digital Illusions
Call Of Duty	Activision	Infinity Ward
Championship Manager 03/04	Eidos	Sports Interactive
City Of Heroes	NCSoft	Cryptic Studios
Deus Ex	Eidos	Ion Storm
Far Cry	Ubisoft	Crytek
Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	Rockstar Games	Rockstar North
Grim Fandango	LucasArts	In-House
Half-Life	Vivendi	Valve Software
Hidden & Dangerous 2	Gathering	Illusion
Medieval: Total War	Activision	Creative Assembly
Operation Flashpoint	Codemasters	In-House
Pro Evolution Soccer 3	Konami	In-House
Rise Of Nations	Microsoft	Big Huge Games
Sam & Max Hit The Road	Activision	LucasArts
Sensible World Of Soccer	Sensible Software	Renegade
System Shock	EA	Looking Glass Games
The Sims	EA	Maxis
TRON 2.0	Buena Vista	Monolith
Unreal Tournament 2004	Atari	Epic Games

WHY YOU SHOULD OWN...

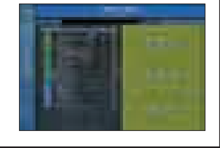
City Of Heroes
Possibly one of the most fun and accessible MMORPGs that we've ever played – all wrapped in a spandex bow.



TRON 2.0
Recreates the feel of the movie brilliantly and easily rates as one of our favourite film-licensed games.



Champ Manager 03/04
The last decent game in the series before you'll have to decide exactly where your gaming loyalties lie…



PERIPHERALS

THEY MAY NOT BE EVERYONE'S CUP OF TEA, BUT EACH CONSOLE HAS ITS OWN MUST-HAVE PERIPHERALS – THOSE LITTLE EXTRAS THAT MAKE THE GAMING EXPERIENCE ALL THE MORE PLEASURABLE. CAN YOU KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF THEM?

ZBOARD

Console: PC
From: Ideazon
Price: £39.99 (main unit), £14.99 (game-specific keysets)
Available: Now

The concept of a gaming-specific keyboard might sound bizarre, but having seen Ideazon's Zboard (it rhymes with 'keyboard'), we're surprised no-one thought of it sooner. Essentially a keyboard with enlarged buttons and easy access to the most commonly-used commands, the unit software comes pre-loaded with specific key-binding layouts for ten games (including *Battlefield*s *1942* and *Vietnam*, *Far Cry* and *Unreal Tournament*). However, users can also program their own key bindings for other games and store them for later use. Aside from allowing more multiple key presses than a regular keyboard, the handiest thing about it is the removable keyset system. If you want to type normally, simply plug in the alternative keyset. With a number of limited-edition game-specific keysets due out soon for games such as *Medal Of Honor: Pacific Assault* and *Doom 3*, this is ideal for the dedicated PC gamer.

UNIVERSAL TFT MONITOR

Console: PS2/Xbox/Cube
From: Joytech
Price: £149.99
Available: Now

Having more than one television sounds like a nice idea, but it's a luxury that not everyone can afford – whether through a lack of cash or space. However, Joytech's latest entry into the portable monitor market offers a solution to both problems, as well as providing a quality product to boot. With its high-definition TFT screen measuring an impressive seven inches, and offering an improved version of Joytech's patented SRS surround sound technology, the unit accommodates multiple video standards (PAL 50, 60 and NTSC) and accepts Composite, S-Video and RGB input thanks to the multitude of adaptor cables included in the package (including a SCART block, surprisingly enough). What's more, you can use it with practically anything from consoles and DVD players to videos, digital TV boxes and anything else with a compatible input. With wall mounts, a solid stand and an in-car adaptor included in the price, it really is a bargain – we honestly can't recommend this highly enough.



PLUG 'N' PLAY WIRELESS BROADBAND KIT

Console: PS2/Xbox/PC
From: US Robotics
Price: £89.99 (Access Point/Router), £69.99 (Wireless Bridge), £149.99 (Router/Bridge Package)
Available: Now

Wireless might be all the rage, but the dream of a cable-free home is still some way off becoming a reality. That said, the latest kit from US Robotics does at least enable you to sort out your gaming needs as far as a wireless set-up goes, whether you're interested in full-on broadband use or a more simple LAN network.

Although both pieces of equipment are shown here (the combined Access Point/Router and the smaller Wireless Bridge), how much of it you need depends on what you want to do. The most basic use, for instance, is for wireless link-up play between two or more machines, for which you'd only require one Wireless Bridge per console. You can now play from different rooms, or even between houses next to or across the street from each other, thanks to the unit having a range of 1,000 feet across a clear area.

If, on the other hand, you're looking to go online wirelessly then you may also have to invest in the Access Point/Router if you don't already have a wireless-compatible router or modem. While it costs more, the results speak for themselves. We ran three consoles (all playing different games online at once, in separate parts of the office) through one Access Point located in a different room and it didn't even blink, let alone throw up issues of signal conflict or lag.

The best thing about it all is the ease of use. Although linking to a wireless PC card requires a small amount of installation, using it for console action is a complete no-brainer – just plug it in. This is the perfect answer for anyone looking to go wireless with their online gaming, especially if you invest in the cost-effective combined package. Check out www.play.com or www.broadbandbuyer.co.uk for more details.

NO MORE CABLES



Now you can play link-up with your neighbour without leaving the house. Ideal for UK summers.


eMag


NEXT MONTH IN GAMES™
ODDWORLD: STRANGER
You thought the West was wild? In Oddworld it's just weird. games™ visits San Francisco to get to grips with what could be EA's smartest licence acquisition yet…
180 PAGES OF WICKY-WICKY WILD GAMING
ON SALE
9 SEPTEMBER '04



NEXT MONTH

MORE… PREVIEWS

More extensive delving into the games you know you want – *Halo 2, Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory, GTA: San Andreas, EverQuest II* and EA's collective Christmas assault, all under one magazine-shaped roof.

MORE… REVIEWS

Put on your gaming waders – there's a flood coming. Hotly anticipated titles such as *Burnout 3: Takedown, Headhunter: Redemption, The Sims 2, Juiced, Second Sight, D-Day* and *Doom 3* will be getting the review treatment next month.

MORE… FEATURES

games™ finally gets to talk to Peter Molyneux as he gives his views on the games industry; we take a good look at the world of game modification and explore the underground world of the bedroom coders; and with mobile gaming becoming increasingly popular, we talk to the important players in the ever-growing industry and check out the latest range of mobile phone technology for videogames.

Please note: Due to late code and unforeseen circumstances and stuff, we can't guarantee that the next issue will actually contain all these things. But it will definitely have *something* in it, like words and pictures and what have you.

CONTACT

ILLUMINATING THE WORLD OF gamesTM

THIS IS THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE WORLD OF VIDEOGAMES – KIND OF LIKE POINTS OF VIEW BUT WITHOUT BARRY TOOK AND SILLY VOICE-OVERS



Independent stores are bad, Nintendo is bad, naked ladies offering their services are very bad, the demise of the arcades is bad… Come on, people, turn those frowns upside down and give us a grin… Oh, what's the point?

MAKING CONTACT

☐ **There are many wonderful ways to get in touch with games™. The traditional postal method is perfectly acceptable using the address below:**

games™
Highbury Entertainment
Paragon House
St Peter's Road
Bournemouth
BH1 2JS

☐ However, there are quicker ways to reach us thanks to the technological marvel that is the internet. Email us at this address: **gamestm@paragon.co.uk**

☐ Alternatively, why not get yourself on our dedicated forum? Here you should be shielded from multiple spams and infantile remarks. Access to the site has been password protected and only those of you who read **games™** will be able to get onto the site – and if you've bought this magazine then you're not the sort to be abusive and childish, are you? Follow these quick steps to getting on the **games™** forum and enjoy hassle-free chatting with those of us who share a passion for gaming.

☐ **Step One:**
Get yourself online. It's fairly simple, so we're sure you'll think of something.

☐ **Step Two:**
Type the following into the browser window: **www.totalgames.net**
You will arrive at the Totalgames website. From here click on the 'forum' icon. News users will have to register via the 'new user' icon – it's a simple step-by-step process which we're sure you can manage.

☐ **Step Three:**
Once registered, simply email **gamestm@paragon.co.uk** with the password '**Bung**' and your username. Then a whole world of sophisticated wit and games chat will be yours. It says here.

☐ **WITH REGARD TO** Lis Ries' letter concerning sexism in the industry and your comments (issue 20), the view your magazine appears to have taken is that if you're not part of the solution, then you're part of the problem. This is a sound judgement in this case and I agree that Lis should pursue her career in the games industry with a view to changing it for the better.

Yes, it's up to all of us to challenge offensive sexism wherever we find it. So I guess I should start with your magazine as, frankly, I find your words of encouragement hard to swallow when you've dedicated a whole page of advertising to explicitly erotic girls begging me to let them turn me on. I think the best thing you can do is remove such material and print an apology to Lis and anyone else who finds this to be grossly hypocritical. Because as it stands, **games™** is definitely part of the problem.
Matt Roberts

games™: Occasionally, and without our knowledge, our advertising department sell adverts that we'd rather not see in the magazine. Rest assured, we've 'had a word' and the offending adverts have now disappeared. Obviously, and for what it's worth, we are sorry for any offence that they might have caused.

☐ **JUST TO CONGRATULATE** you on an excellent piece of journalism. I think anyone in their mid-twenties to mid-thirties would have been reading the article 'Goodbye To All That' (issue 21) with a lump in their throat and a tear in their eye. It seems that gone are the days when a holiday meant a week in an Aladdin's cave of flashing lights and machines calling us with 'Prepare to qualify', 'Welcome to the Fantasydome', 'Thor is about to die!' – all after our hard-earned pocket money.

It does seem a shame that a lot of the big arcade manufacturers have stopped making cabinets now, but surely the fault does lie a little with them. I remember the horror of finding out that the 'new' *Space Harrier* cabinet cost 30p per play and this then became 50p and now the standard is £1. This surely puts people off playing for a few seconds, and who wants to continue again for another quid? Maybe if arcade games were cheaper they may now still be popular.

This is perhaps wishful thinking and maybe the quality of the current consoles along with the growth of online gaming would have killed off arcades anyway. Although arcades live on in emulators, the feeling of seeing your name at the top of the high-score table or the grudging respect you got from a complete stranger upon the destruction of a tough end-of-level boss can never be recreated. I guess the arcades just ran out of continues.
Stuart Pearson

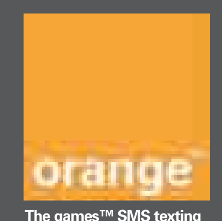
games™: Rising costs were a factor, but then the evolution of consoles also played its part. Once the bastion of cutting-edge technology, when

"UNFORTUNATELY, DUE TO THE CUSTOMER THE PHANTOM WILL PROBABLY FALL ON ITS BIG, OVERDUE, PLASTIC ARSE"

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LETTER OF THE MONTH

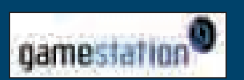
NICK ROLFE'S LETTER about pre-owned games (issue 21) surprised me. He says he would feel guilty depriving the industry of the cash it needs by downloading games instead of paying inflated prices, and yet he, like many others, appears not to realise that by buying pre-owned, he is doing the same. Certain high-street game stores are crippling the industry and sending developers into the ground with their pre-owned policies.

When a game first gets sold, a small amount of that money goes to the developer. However, when that game gets traded in and sold on, all the profits from that sale go to the store. This means that every time you buy a pre-owned game you deny the developer its deserved profits and instead feed an immoral corporation that is exploiting the industry.

The reason pre-owned PC games don't exist is because of the user agreement you usually have to click on during installation; it states that the game cannot legally be sold on. There should be something similar for console games. High-street stores' pre-owned policies are evil: they exploit the industry and exploit you by giving you four quid for an old game that will be sold for 20. If you want cheaper games download them rather than feed these corporations' greed!

Keza MacDonald

games™: There's no doubt that stores are taking advantage of the second-hand market, but it's as much to do with the gamers – how many times have you heard someone boast that they're going to play a game for ten days then get their money back? The best way around this is to only give full refunds on unopened games – this would curb the mass return of so-so titles that's causing the problem in the first place.



If you'd like to line your pockets with £100 of Gamestation vouchers then send us a games-related letter crammed with sparkling wit and pertinent points. Extra marks will be awarded for neat handwriting.

arcades tried to offer different experiences to their home counterparts (with sit-on cabinets, jet skis and the like) the expense alienated the very people who populated arcades in the first place. Thankfully, the games of yesterday are widely available to play on a variety of formats, and though it's not quite the same, plenty of them have online scoreboards for a bit of showing off.

I RECENTLY HAD a discussion with a friend that videogames were too expensive, especially if you compare them to films on DVD that are usually half the price. Games, unlike films, have a smaller audience and don't have as many avenues to make profit as films do. Films have cinema release, rental, DVD release and then possibly a few years later a collector's edition is released. If the film is successful the name can be sold to help advertise other brands, from breakfast cereal to cars.

So what if there was a console that could try to cut the costs of games for gamers. What if games became completely downloadable, eradicating the cost of packaging, staff and all the other overheads it takes to run a shop? Some other clever monkey has come up with this idea already and named it the Phantom (as you probably know, as you've printed many articles about this console).

Unfortunately, due to the consumer the Phantom will probably fall on its big, overdue, plastic arse. The problem is, whereas consumers want cheaper products they also want something to show for it. Retro games collectors will spend hundreds of pounds hunting down copies of original *Metal Slug* carts to sit on their shelves as the crowning

CONTACT
ILLUMINATING THE WORLD OF gamesTM

TEXT LIFE...

☐ People complain about lack of originality in games today. Bollocks I say! I remember playing a traffic light simulator back in my Amstrad days. It sucked!
gamesTM: That was only because you had a green-screen monitor.

☐ Please – drop all the porn adverts, a useful income 4 U I know but they have no place in ur otherwise fine mag
gamesTM: Yes, yes, they've gone. We hate them too, if it's any consolation. And we've run out of black tape to cover up the 'bits' in all the copies in the office…

☐ Bring back the Timeline Highlights in your reviews! They are a useful benchmark
gamesTM: They haven't gone anywhere, it's just that they only appear in four-page reviews.

☐ I just punched my gameboy cause trying to beat mother Brain on Metroid Zero hard mode is bloody hard and annoying!
gamesTM: What do you want? Sympathy? We're afraid we're too busy to come round and kiss it better.

☐ Is Duke Nukem Forever ever going to come out or is it vapour ware? Hail to the king baby!
gamesTM: It's coming out, only Duke Nukem is going to be dressed as a pirate. No, sorry, he's going to be a buccaneer.

☐ Nick Rolfe: GET A JOB
gamesTM: Look, he was only trying to argue for cheaper second-hand games (Contact, issue 21). There's nothing wrong with that, is there?

☐ ELSPA chief Roger Bennet seems to have been around for ages but can you tell me: a) His approx salary and b) who his eventual successor may be. Thankyou.
gamesTM: Thinking of sending in your CV? We have no idea what Roger Bennett earns (though it's possibly magic beans), and we're quite sure that he has no immediate plans to retire.

☐ The benefit of having the top 20 list in a chart format over an alphabetical list is simply this. It once gave me a warm feeling inside 2 know I owned the…
…games rated the top slot on each format by the best multiformat mag available. But now that is lost.U have stolen that feeling. Wont u please return it?
gamesTM: We changed it so that we could avoid all those needless 'X' game should be above 'Y' game arguments – so no, it's not going to change.

"I CRINGED WHEN I WATCHED A TEN-MINUTE VIDEO OF THE NINTENDO DS. A MORE INTELLECTUALLY STUNTED, BACKWARDS-LOOKING PRODUCT I HAVE RARELY SEEN"

glory of their collections. I, too, would rather have the box on my shelf with an instruction book full of illustrations (none has beaten the presentation of *American McGee's Alice In Wonderland* that came with a nurse's diary that charted Alice's trek into insanity) – when little extras like these are added to a title they start to become more than a game.

The irony is that the Phantom is going to fail thanks to the very consumers that it is trying to appease. I like the idea of the Phantom offering cheaper games, but I'm not going to buy one, as all I'll be getting for my money is some digital code on a hard drive. And let's face it – much worthier consoles have failed.
Tom H

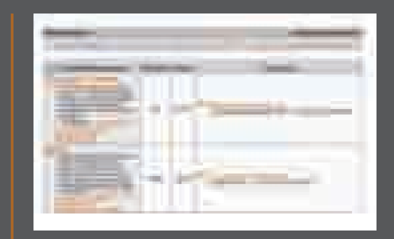
gamesTM: We wait patiently in the hope of finally seeing if the Phantom can actually deliver – though, like you, our expectations aren't too high (particularly now that it seems certain that the next generation of consoles is just around the corner). The issue about the price of games still frustrates, but it is one that looks unlikely to be resolved any time soon. There are thousands of gamers who are prepared to spend £40 on a new release, and for as long as that remains the case, games are unlikely to get any cheaper.

☐ **I HAVE WATCHED** a lot of the E3 coverage on the net and I cringed when I watched a ten-minute video of the Nintendo DS. A more intellectually stunted, backwards-looking product I have rarely seen. This is from someone who remembers Sony claiming the Emotion Engine would be like 'plugging into the Matrix'. Please don't think that this is just troll baiting. I own both a GameCube and a GBA and have just bought a GBA SP for my wife. *Advance Wars* is genius, *Mario Kart* on the GBA is a mini-miracle, *F-Zero* is a joy. But I have reached the point of no return.

Faced with the prospect of the PSP, Nintendo has responded with a plaintive cry to its blind following and has immediately churned out all the old favourites and pushed out the IP boat again. Fed up with *Mario Advance 1-5*? Why not buy *Mario DS 1-5*! Sick of playing *Metroid* at home? Play the same game on the move with DS! *Mario 64* stuck at the bottom of your cupboard? Why dig it out when you can pay for it again on the DS! *Wario Ware Advance* is genius, so surely it's twice the genius on the twin-screened DS?

It's a standard fanboy tactic to attack companies like Sony and Microsoft as big corporations out to suck your wallet dry, but Nintendo takes the gold medal when it comes to milking the public. Remember, this is the company that delayed the GBA for 18 months so it could milk the *Pokémon* franchise on the Game Boy Color. This is the company that was fined massively by the EU for blatant price fixing, yet is still charging the UK 50 per cent more than the US for the same game carts. Does anyone remember paying over £60 for SNES carts of *Street Fighter*? Or £60 for many N64 carts, at a time when competitors were charging £40 for their output? Carts may be more expensive, but not by that much!

Nintendo is the new Ouroboros, feeding on its past glory. There is no doubt that it produces some of the world's finest IPs, but recent output has been self-referential and, essentially, old tricks in new clothing. For every *Wind Waker*, there is a *Legend Of Zelda Advance*. The icing on the cake for me is 20 NES games on 20 GBA



FROM THE FORUM

IT'S GREAT FOR SPREADSHEETS, BUT WHO PLAYS GAMES ON A PC TODAY?

Hong Kong Phooey

☐ I don't play any games on my PC for various reasons and I was wondering how many people here play regularly on their PC and how they feel about it. What puts me off the most is the whole installation/downloading patches malarky, which I can never get to grips with. With a console it's all so easy, you just insert the game and play. However, PC gaming seems to offer better value for money (once you've got a good computer). There always seem to be new mods, maps and so on available free to increase the playtime of a game. Plus you've got shareware titles and the budget ranges of games costing £4.99.

Number45

☐ At the moment I'm probably playing more PC games than console. That's not to say that I prefer the platform (though I do for certain types of game) – the main reason for that is because I can play on my PC while Mrs 45 watches the TV. You've covered the main benefits of both platforms, but as always it's the games that dictate which platforms I prefer at any given time.

Mortal Wombat

☐ I'm hooked on online RPGs – or I used to be. I can't afford to update my PC at the minute, and seeing as I'm not really that interested in some of the games that the PC specialises in I've been giving a lot more attention to my consoles.

Lt. Eggman5

☐ I too am hooked on one particular MMORPG, *Runescape*. It's worryingly consuming my life; I mean really worryingly – all I want to do is mine. PC gaming for me carries one big-ass plus point, and that is Mouselook. Anyone who's played *GTA III* or *Vice City* on the PC will know that it's so much better – there is now massive freedom to shoot where you want to without getting a first-person firing weapon. FPSs too – it's just so much quicker and more accurate shooting with a mouse than with a stick. Management games also work better on PC – again due to the mouse control as it provides speed and accuracy. *The Sims* on the PS2/GC, for example, is just clumsy in comparison to the PC version. PCs also have better online feasibility than consoles at the moment, as shown by the masses of MMORPGS. However, PCs have always failed to pull off sports, fighting and platform games as well as consoles, and this causes me to put them ahead of PCs.

Theory Of Games

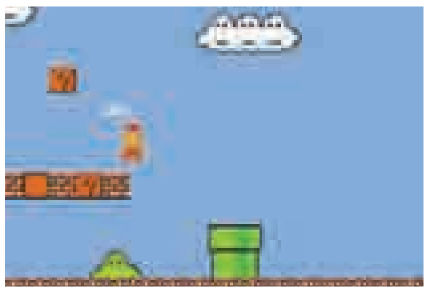
☐ I do like PC games. I prefer the first-person shooters, especially *Call Of Duty* – that hasn't had too many patches while I've been using it, but I suppose games that regularly have patches can get annoying. I don't have many PC games because I hate the games slowing down, and upgrading costs too much and is always a pain. So if I am going to get any new PC games they will have to be exclusives or I'd get the console version.

Super Al

☐ I loved PC games like *Baldur's Gate* (not the crappy console version) and point-and-click games – in general they are better on the PC. PCs are also brilliant for RTS games, which I really like. Oh, and *Championship Manager* – how could anybody ever forget that? But my computer is now falling behind the times (it's about three years old) and I can't be bothered to buy a new one. A lot of the newer games need super-powerful PCs, and I can't be bothered to upgrade either. If I had to choose consoles or PCs, I would choose a console over a PC any day.



Sometimes a download won't do and you just have to have the packaging – like *American McGee's Alice In Wonderland.*



Nintendo's attempt to cash in on its classic gaming franchises is a step too far, so says one of our apoplectic readers.

carts at £10 a time – £200 for a slice of nostalgia. Good old Nintendo comes crashing in on the retro wave with a tsunami. Why give Midway or Williams your hard-earned £20 for a dozen or so games, when you can give us a tenner a pop. Thank you, Nintendo, for attempting to empty my wallet again. It's been nice knowing you! I, for one, won't be back.

Chris Campbell

games™: Blimey, aren't you being a little harsh on Nintendo? Other companies have been quite happy to offer gamers franchises and rehashes without much in the way of criticism, but when Nintendo does the same it's suddenly the worst idea ever. And let's not forget that Nintendo has over 20 years of IP to draw upon – over double that of Sony and Microsoft – so it's had longer to recycle its successful franchises. Perhaps in ten years we'll be playing revamped *Halo*s or *Gran Turismo*s – and paying through the nose for them. As it happens, though, we also think that the NES Classics range doesn't represent the best value for money. But, as usual, there'll be plenty of people who'll buy them regardless.

☐ **YOUR ARTICLE ABOUT** indie game stores (issue 20) was an interesting read but you missed out the most important fact about indies which is that they have been fleecing the hardcore gamer for the past decade. Harsh, I know, but still, the truth is often harsh. Take, for example, the PS2 launch. Independent stores were selling it for anything from £500 to £1,000 – that was at least double the cost of the machine. Throw in a couple of games (ranging from £60 to £80 depending on just how 'big' the title is assumed to be) and what you have is a mark-up that will keep the indie stocked up with Jammy Dodgers for quite some time.

And indies are not the worst culprit, oh no, not at all. Throughout the early Nineties (before the birth of the interweb and all that) it was customary to pay truly extortionate amounts for the latest import games – £120 for *Street Fighter II Turbo*? That'll do nicely, sir.

The simple truth is that much of the elitism surrounding the import scene today stems from the fleecing that independent shops incorporated back in the day. With the steady growth of the big chains selling games at prices the indies just can't compete with, the influx of import sites and the second-hand market booming, the total death of the indie store is thankfully near.

JohnB

games™: Damn them all for trying to make money… Indies, as our feature tried to argue, provide services that some high-street stores don't seem to be able to offer: knowledgeable staff, cheap second-hand games, retro games and hardware, not to mention their vital role in the import market. There's no doubt that some stores have charged high prices for the latest import machines, but then some people were prepared to pay for the privilege of not having to wait a year or more for official PAL releases. As with our comments about Nintendo games, you don't have to buy your games from independent stores, but without indies we'd lose a lot of choice and a vital resource for retro gaming enthusiasts.